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A Nobel.

BY FRANCESCO ABATI.

EDITED BY

W. WINWOOD READE.

VOL. II.



LONDON:
EDWARD MOXON & CO., DOVER STREET.
1865.

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250. l. 267.

LONDON:
BRADBURY, EVANS, AND CO., PRINTERS, WHITEFRIARS.



SEE-SAW.

CHAPTER I.

THE next morning as Miss Atkins was surveying her drawing-room restored to its pristine primness, and neatly shrouded in brown holland, the butler brought her a letter. It was from her brother, who informed her he had just espoused Miss Maddalena Restoni. The marriage had been solemnised at the parish registry office, and at the Catholic chapel in Farm Street. They were en route for the Continent, whence they would return in about a month's time. He also informed her that he had disposed of his business, and definitively retired from the City. He had given his agent full instructions with respect to the letting of the house

in Bedford Square, and the preparation of Vachell Court, which would be his residence for the future. The letter ended by politely inviting her to precede them to Vachell, and to look upon it as her home. In case of her doing so, the agent had been apprised that the forming of the establishment would be left entirely in her hands. But if she felt that she would not live happily with the object of his choice, he was willing to grant her any assistance which she might require in addition to her own income.

These news fell upon her like a cold douche. She had for some time been aware that Richard had been intimate with Restoni the singer. She had been annoyed to hear of a new liaison, but taking it for granted that such people are never respectable, she had been only uneasy about the money which her brother might be squandering upon her. One would imagine that a pious Protestant, so assiduous in devotional exercise, would have been glad that he had married the (supposed) partner of his guilt. But, alas! it is not only the fashionable and worldly who prefer that their relatives should indulge in moderate vice under the sanction of society, than that

they should perpetuate an enormous folly, under that of religion and respectability. The middle classes are quite as sensible in this respect as other people. There is scarcely a small shopkeeper, Anglican, Wesleyan, Independent, or Baptist, who would not feel more outraged if his son married a maid-servant than if he ruined her, and left her to starve in the streets. Upon this point all the religious sects in England, numerous as they are, would be agreed, and it is one of those commandments, which they bear engraved upon their hearts, harder than Moses' tablets of stone : "Thou shalt not marry with one who is poor and beneath thee in station, nor with one who hath an ill name, lest men laugh thee to scorn, and in this life thou prospereth not."

Miss Atkins of course laid most of the blame upon Maddalena. "The nasty scheming thing!" she exclaimed between her sobs, "the vulgar, foreign hussy! the low creature, coming here with her shop in her throat to ensnare poor Richard, who believes everything that a woman tells him."

Her first impulse was to reply to her brother that she would accept neither the home nor the money

which he offered. But the reflection that such a step would be precisely what that odious woman must desire most, made her change her mind. She resolved to go to Vachell at once, secure the keys, and endeavour to retain them as long as she could. The idea of leading an opposition (that one consolation of a fallen minister) cheered her for a little time. But she soon relapsed into despondency. She had hoped to have married her brother with some young person in her own set, who respected her as a woman, who venerated her as a saint, and over whom she might have ruled with the double authority of an elder sister and a priest. She read the letter over again. It was a masterly production, as all Atkins' business letters were. He wanted some one to supervise his agent, to whom he had given such large powers, and he knew no one upon whom he could depend as he could upon his sister. She, on the other hand, was delighted when she found on re-perusing the letter that she was to form an establishment. Her mortification was half effaced by this bribe which Atkins had appended to the bitter news. She felt the enthusiasm of one who is appointed governor to a

maiden colony; she called on the agent that afternoon, and went down to Vachell the next day.

Vachell Court was an old-fashioned country-house, cumbrously but comfortably built, with a tiled roof, narrow massive windows, double-doors to all the principal rooms, extensive stables and back-offices; a park and some acres of shrubberies, paddock, and kitchen-garden. It possessed none of the novelties of modern refinement, neither conservatory, vinery, hot-house, nor landscape-garden. Everything was old, and in a state of partial decay. The furniture, once costly, was now mouldering. The stained spaces left on removal of family portraits (which alone the Vachells had not sold) had never been filled up. The house had been let to a family of males and one sporting girl, who had taken it for the sake of the shooting (it was an estate of three thousand acres, with some good covers), and on account of its position in the centre of a hunting county.

Miss Atkins spent the first day rambling about the house and grounds, like a book-worm in a precious library, too excited to examine anything closely, but drinking in general impressions. The

next week she spent from morning till night, scrutinising, classifying, and preparing. She attended the hiring-fairs at Oxford and Reading, and engaged maid-servants with plain faces and strong arms. She made a gigantic inventory. She dusted, scoured, scrubbed, and swept everything. She condemned half a library, but, a much better house-keeper than Don Quixote's, instead of burning the dangerous books, she sent them to London to be sold. She disposed of some coloured nudities in a similar way. On the other hand she found that there was very little to buy. By dint of patching and repairing, the furniture could do very well. Out of doors she altered little, except to turn some flower-plots into cabbage-beds.

She employed her odd moments in writing to Richard letters full of these domestic details, occasionally spiced with a reproach. When the month had elapsed she received a letter from him. He was to arrive the next day. At four o'clock in the afternoon she was walking up and down in the grand and sombre drawing-room, restless but resolute, like a general who awaits the first sight of the enemy's columns. She took up a work of devotion and

began to read, but as she turned over each page she glanced out of the window, which gave her a view beyond the grounds of some ploughed fields, bisected by a white streak of turnpike-road. A black speck appeared thereon; she thrust a text-embroidered marker into the book and walked to the window. The speck expanded into a carriage-and-pair, which entered the gate by the ruined lodge, was lost sight of among the green trees, and thence emerging came up to the front door with a dash.

"So you are come back at last, Richard," said Miss Atkins, as her brother alighted. "What extravagance, to come with a two-horse fly, and only four miles from the station."

William replied to this effusive welcome by helping Maddalena out of the fly and introducing her to his sister. She took the girl's hand in hers and looked piercingly into her face. On the whole she felt relieved. She had expected to see an extremely handsome woman with painted cheeks, a theatrical demeanour, and in a semi-stage costume like an undress uniform. She could hardly believe that this was the famous Restoni who stood before her in a faded bonnet and plain travelling dress, her eyes

drooped, and her arms hanging listlessly by her side. Her maid was a sober, respectable-looking English-woman of about thirty years of age.

"Where is the rest of your luggage, my dear?" said Miss Atkins, looking at the two feminine trunks which were strapped down on the roof of the fly.

"That is all that I have—the black one," said Maddalena. "The other is Mary's."

Miss Atkins opened her eyes.

"Come in, Maddalena," said Atkins kindly, and held out his hand. She took it with the tips of her fingers. When she felt the cold stones of the hall beneath her, and breathed the musty air of that old house, a shudder passed over her.

"May I conduct you to your room?" said Miss Atkins?

Maddalena bowed and followed her.

In a few moments Miss Atkins returned.

"Your *wife* is going to lie down for a little while," she said. Then she started.

"Good God, Richard, how ill you look. Your eyes are like glass. Have you had any——"

"Once."

"Does she know it?"

"No : I was away from her at the time."

"Very well ; then she must not. Now I want you to come with me, and see what I have done."

"But Maddalena——"

"She is lying down, I tell you, and does not want to be disturbed. She almost ordered me out of the room."

"Now, I tell you what it is, Jane," said Atkins savagely, "I won't have any of this."

"Gracious me ! Any of what ?"

"Why, you have begun already."

"Begun what, sir ? What *are* you talking of ?"

"Just understand this, Jane, and I tell you once for all. Maddalena is my wife, and she is the mistress of my house. If you intend to be rude to her and plague me, you had better leave it."

"I shall not wait twice to be asked to leave your house, Richard," said Jane in a humble voice. "I am sure that I should never have thought of coming, only you asked me so kindly, and I saw I might be of use to you. Now I will go and pack up my things at once."

"Who wants you to pack up your things ?" growled Atkins. "Don't be such a fool, Jane."

"I hope that you will find the servants suit you, Richard. I took great pains to get good ones."

"My dear Jane——"

"I fear that I have spent a great deal of money on the papering, and the fuf—fuf—furniture, Richard. But I did all for the best, I am sure. I did not wish *her* to be discontented directly she came."

Atkins expostulated, but Jane was quite determined to go. "After all," said she, "it was foolish in me to come. I have managed your house for you now so many, many years. I shall be much happier away."

"But Maddalena will not want to manage the house," he replied. "I am sure that she will be very glad if you will take it off her hands. She has had no experience in this sort of thing, and I don't think she has any taste for it either. Indeed, if you like, I will speak to her about it myself."

So Jane consented to remain, having thus secured an ally on her side in the combat which she supposed would soon ensue.

But three days passed, and Maddalena showed no desire to reign. She answered politely when she was addressed; but was cold, taciturn, and absent, and

seemed to avoid, both her husband and his sister; wandering about all day as if she was in a dream, or sitting at the window with her hands folded in her lap, and her eyes following the clouds.

Miss Atkins, who judged every one by herself, could not believe that this indifference to power was real, and laid a trap. On the fourth day she came to her and said :—

“My dear, I have taken the liberty of keeping house for you till you had recovered from the fatigue of your journey. I will now hand over the keys to their rightful mistress.” So saying, she laid in her lap a small basket containing an enormous bunch of keys.

Maddalena looked at them in a stupified manner; then raising her eyes to Miss Atkins' face, saw immediately how she ought to act. Taking up the basket she gave it back to her, with a polite speech in the Italian manner. Miss Atkins, though she secretly despised Maddalena for not claiming her rights, began to like her a little. She testified this tender feeling by modulations of her voice, by small attentions, proffered confidences, and gentle looks; but Maddalena remained always the same—cold,

distant, and reserved. Her sister-in-law began to respect and even to fear her a little. There was something majestic in the indifference of this young girl who stood apart from them both, enveloped in her own thoughts as in a cloud. But soon an incident occurred which produced a change in her feelings and behaviour towards the family.

The household was conducted on principles of stern frugality. One day when the dinner was even plainer than usual, Miss Atkins offered an apology, which had the advantage of costing nothing. "You must find this very humble fare," she said, "after what you have been accustomed to."

"No, madam," said Maddalena, "till within the last two years I had been accustomed for a long time to live like a peasant, upon fruit and *polenta*, which is made of Indian corn."

"You must have suffered great privations after your father sold his estate," said Atkins.

This word "estate" surprised Maddalena. But she supposed that it meant the same as "business," and replied:—"But even before my father's misfortune, we did not live so very sumptuously. To be sure, as we kept a boarding-house——"

Atkins supposed that she was alluding to another period of her reverses. "But the gentry and nobility?" he asked.

"Ah! that is another thing," she said, "If they are bachelors they usually dine at the restaurant. And if they have families and live at home—but I do not know exactly how they live: I have not been in their society."

"But before your father sold his estate——"

"An estate, sir! what is that? Do you call a boarding-house an estate?"

"No; this is an estate: a country house and lands. Your father had one and sold it, did he not?" said Atkins, rising from his chair in a state of perturbation.

"Who told you that, sir?"

"He did."

She turned pale.

"Then it is not true," she said firmly. "Why should he have wished to deceive you?" she added, in a musing tone.

"He had very good reasons," said Atkins, pacing up and down the room, his features contracting in a curious manner.

His sister looked at him as if inquiringly, and also rose. When their eyes met he shook his head, and said, "No ; it is nothing." Maddalena remembered this afterwards, though, absorbed in her own thoughts, it made no impression upon her at the time.

A few moments afterwards he sat down again to dinner and said,

"You have not seen your father since we have been back. Would you like to?"

"Yes, sir ; and that reminds me I had a letter from him yesterday, asking me if he could come down."

"Good. Write to him and tell him to come immediately. No ; stop. This is Tuesday. Invite him to come on Saturday."

On Saturday Restoni made his appearance. He embraced his daughter (before the family) with effusion. Immediately recognising Miss Atkins' hostility, and power in her look and tone, he did his utmost to make himself agreeable to her. After dinner Maddalena put on her hat and cloak, and took him out of doors, under the pretence of showing the grounds. They walked together beneath

the majestic elms of the park, and along broad walks between ragged shrubberies.

"It is a splendid place," exclaimed Restoni; "but what money will have to be laid out on it!"

"I do not think Mr. Atkins intends to lay out much."

"Have you asked him to?"

"No; I have not asked him for anything."

"All the better. You will have the more power for the future."

Maddalena did not reply. He walked beside her for a little while, plucking leaves and chewing them. Then he stopped. His face assumed an expression of mingled irony, cunning, and anxiety.

"This is a fine country seat," he said; "but it is not superior to the noble villa which we possessed in Tuscany."

Maddalena did not answer him.

"If you recollect, it was built in the Palladian style, with a grand cortile, marble stairs, superb columns. We also had an estate of vineyards, olive orchards, and corn-fields, without mentioning a pine forest and a mountain."

"Yes," said Maddalena coldly.

Restoni continued, his eyes flickering upon her face as he spoke,—

“But we were afflicted by a long series of misfortunes. Harvests failed, *fattori* embezzled. We were reduced to a state of ennobled poverty. Finally you burned to become a singer. Your father sacrificed everything for you—everything. He sold his estate. He spent it upon masters. He left himself nothing.”

Maddalena looked at him sternly.

“Well?” said she.

“When he consented that his daughter should abandon a profession in which she was amassing a fortune, he represented these circumstances to her bridegroom, who gave him a sum of money to purchase back his lands.”

Maddalena looked at him more kindly.

“And you bought an estate in Tuscany?” she asked.

“Such of course had been my intention; but I found that the sum which the Signor Atkins had reluctantly paid was too small for such a purpose. So I endeavoured to increase it by speculations, and I regret to say that it has——”

"What!" cried Maddalena.

"That it has dissolved."

She bit her lips. He placed his hand upon her shoulder with a soothing gesture; but she shrank away from him.

"I deserve that thou shouldst be angry with me," he said, gently. "Yet pardon me. I am so unfortunate. I did all for the best."

"You have done all for the worst," said Maddalena bitterly. Then she turned round on him. "You want something, or you would not come here. What is it?"

"Simply this. I shall tell thy husband how I have speculated and lost. I shall ask him to renew the sum. I do not want any more. I will contrive to make it enough. Now what thou must do is this. Thou must beg him to give me the money. Thou must tell him how painful it is for thee that the estate of thy forefathers should pass into strange hands. Thou must pray him to forgive me. Thou must weep, thou must kneel to him, thou must——"

"Silence!" cried Maddalena.

Restoni looked at her in wonder. She stood in a

haughty, almost threatening attitude, before him, her eyes flashing with rage and scorn.

"My husband knows everything," she said. "I have told him what we are, and from what we were."

"Diavolo!" muttered Restoni. "Why did I not forewarn her?"

"Forewarn me! You think, then, that I would have been your tool? No, no, sir; you have done enough. You have destroyed my happiness in this life, but you shall not destroy it in the next. You shall not make me a thief."

"Calm thyself, dearest; who wishes to make thee a thief?"

"You, who are one yourself, unhappy man."

"Then let us give up this tale of the estate. Let us confess everything (since everything is known). Ask him only——"

"I will ask him for nothing. You ordered me to marry this man, and I obeyed you. You had made me swear an oath, and I was forced to obey. I married him, and you received the price which you had set upon my life. Now I am his—his, do you hear?—I am branded with his name, as his sheep-

and cattle are ; you have sold me to him ; he has paid for me ; and I am his."

"But, Maddalena, for thy father——"

"I have no father now."

Restoni bent his head. Maddalena turned back towards the house ; he followed at her heels like a dog. He was stupified. Was this cold, severe woman the affectionate and tender girl whom he had parted from only a few weeks before ? Then she had been ductile as gold between his hands : now she was a weapon of sharp, hard steel, which he had laid hold of by the blade.

He suffered that punishment which ought to fall upon all parents who make their daughters marry against their will. In Italy, and in France, it is almost a custom, and society offers its distractions to the wife. But in domestic England it is a worse vice, for its victim suffers more. She sees herself encircled by those who have married because they loved : she is taunted by their happiness : and she is condemned to a life of seclusion, which, with love, is a Home, but which without is a Hell.

During the honeymoon of a marriage de convenience a girl's character undergoes a great change.

She hates alike the parents who have bartered her away and the man who has purchased her with his money or his name. She becomes bitter and sullen in mind ; while her heart slowly hardens in the black frost which has withered up all the flowers of her life. Then, sooner or later, she acquires the hypocrisy of the courtesan. She learns to yield herself up with smiles, to invent false caresses, to simulate passion in her hated husband's arms. If she has a child she may be saved. Her affections concentrate themselves into maternal love. But if not, there may come a day when her parents shall suffer from a shame of which they have been the only cause.

Every woman of delicate feelings will understand that Maddalena, since her marriage, had suffered tortures which were worse to her than death. This will explain her conduct towards her husband and her sister-in-law ; and during the last two or three days she had been reflecting on her father's falsehood. She had looked back into her past life, and a film had fallen from her eyes. By a flash of thought, livid, luminous, and forked, the black mind of her father had been made to her as clear as day. She saw why he had made her take the oath ; why

he had gratified her desire to go upon the stage. Though she could not divine the elaborate plot of which she had been the victim, she suspected that he had purposely brought about the quarrel with Eugenio. At all events, she saw that her lover had only spoken the truth. She had long known that her father was a drunkard. She had now discovered that he was a thief. Restoni's vices had parted her from him. This last reflection was the bitterest of all. It made her absolutely hate her father.

She preceded him to the dining-room. The others were still there. They sat down at the huge oak table. Restoni stood before them, like a criminal before three judges. Atkins and his sister were both embarrassed. Maddalena was pale but calm.

"Jacopo Restoni," she said, "I declare that the pretext under which you obtained money from my husband was false. I deny all previous knowledge of your base and dishonest schemes, and before these witnesses I renounce you as my father."

Restoni looked at her stupidly. Miss Atkins gave a slight exclamation. Her brother nervously cleared his throat.

"Mr. Restoni," he said, "you've had a large sum

of money from me. It's useless just now discussing how you got it; but where's it gone to? That's what I want to know."

"I regret to say that I have been speculating——"

"In what?" said Atkins, pricking up his ears.

"On the Stock Exchange," said Restoni, vaguely.

Atkins gave a dry smile.

"Not much doing on 'Change in August. What could it have been in? Let me see. What was the last smash? Was it Russian bonds?"

"Yes; that was it," cried Restoni, falling headlong into the trap. "Ah, those cursed bonds!"

Atkins looked at a printed list among his papers.

"Ah, I see I have been mistaken. Russian bonds are at 90. Try again."

Restoni saw that he was attempting to grapple with a giant. He was out of his element. He said no more.

"If you wish us to help you, you had better tell the truth," said Atkins.

"Yes; do tell the truth, Mr. Restoni," said Miss Atkins.

Restoni was rapidly combining the ideas, which

were pouring out of his productive brain, when Atkins moved again.

"Allow me to assist your memory," he said, sorting his papers with a skilful hand. "I have letters here from London and Paris, where I find you have been speculating on a small scale. Do you remember the Rue . . . , Mr. Restoni?"

By going up to London, and making diligent inquiries, Atkins had managed in three days to lay hold of his clue, and had received one or two letters from Paris. The rest of the documents were "quakers." Restoni supposed that the whole pile consisted of evidence against him, so he gave in at once.

On receiving his money he had paid the sporting debts which excluded him from the turf, and went over to Paris. There his thirst for play brought him into contact with a gang of gentlemanly sharpers, who cleared him out. However, besides the large sums which he had lost at *écarté*, he had lived in the most prodigal manner, supposing (this he did not confess) that he was enjoying the first golden egg out of a large nest.

"Well, sir," said Atkins, "and what do you wish

us to do for you now? Do you consider that you have any further claims on us?"

"Yes, I do," cried Restoni. "If my daughter had remained single she would have been making money, and she would have fed and clothed me, I suppose."

Atkins turned to his wife.

"Will you decide for me, Maddalena?"

"I have no right to decide for you, sir, she replied haughtily; "and I must decline to do so. If you think that you ought to give him more money, give it him. If you think that you have done all that your duty requires, send him away."

Restoni looked at her—such a look—and turned to go. Her lips trembled, but she did not speak.

"Stop a moment, sir; stop a moment," said Atkins hurriedly. "I wish to do what is right. Maddalena, what I have is yours. Give him just what you please."

"I thank you, sir," she said, in a cold and bitter tone; "but I cannot interfere. It is purely a matter of business. You received me from the Signor Restoni, and you gave him what he asked."

"But supposing that you were still supporting

your father, and he had served you as he has served me, what would you do?"

"I would certainly not pander to his vices. I would, as he has said, feed and clothe him—but no more."

Atkins wrote a letter. "Take this," he said, "to the address. It is my lawyer's. He will tell you when and how you will receive your money. It is a life annuity of a hundred pounds, to be paid quarterly in advance, and to be increased if Mrs. Atkins at any time desires it."

Restoni bowed. The brother and sister quickly left the room. Maddalena remained, with her eyes fixed moodily upon the floor.

"My daughter," said the old man in a tender voice, "thou art changed."

"Yes," she said, "and you are the cause of it. You have bargained away my life—for what? A few hours of excitement in a hell. Every moment of my existence here is an agony. And it is you to whom I owe this. But why do you stay? You have got what you came for; you have your money. Go, sir, go."

"And art thou unhappy?" he murmured softly.

"Poor child. Maddalena," he whispered, "wilt thou come with me and share the little that I have? We shall be poor, but we shall be together."

She turned her eyes full on his face. "Yes," she said with a sneer, "we shall be together, shall we not? and we can escape to the continent from my master who has bought me, and we can go to Vienna, and I can take an engagement and gain a large salary for you to spend on your dear cards again. Oh, my beloved father, I understand what affection you have for me now. It is my voice you love—as others did; there are none who love poor Maddalena for herself. Do not stay, then, I tell you. There is no more money for you here."

Restoni looked at her with a gentle and sorrowful air. "I deserve this," he said, "and I am punished rightly. Then yielding to an impulse of affection and repentance, which the worst men feel at least once in their lives, he knelt down before his daughter and said, "Maddalena, I promise thee that in thy presence I will never speak of money again. I will try to lead a good life. If Mr. Atkins will help me I will enter a commercial house. But before

I go, place thy hands upon my head and say in thy own sweet voice, Father, I forgive thee."

Her heart began to melt: she slowly raised her hands, when her eye caught sight of a mosaic pin in his scarf. It was like one which Eugenio used to wear. She sprang back from him and cried, "No, no. I cannot forgive you. I will never forgive you all my life."

He rose, his face black with passion. "You will not forgive me, eh? Well, some day you will find it difficult to forgive yourself. You will not pander to my vices, you said just now? Well, we shall see. As for your purse-proud Englishman, I will teach him that a Restoni is not to be insulted."

This reduced boarding-house keeper, by repeating always the same tale, had almost persuaded himself that it was true, and really felt at that moment the rage of an offended noble. He bowed to Maddalena with dignity, and said, "Signora, you are my daughter; I pardon you," and he strode haughtily from the room.

This scene, which to spectator would have been ludicrous, was terrible for Maddalena. She went upstairs to her dressing-room; she had furnished it

herself with a little bed, a toilette-table, a cottage piano, a book-case, a round table, and two chairs. Over the fire-place hung her picture of the Madonna of the Seven Dolors. In a corner of the room was a silver crucifix, and beneath it a cushion. This was her sanctum. Here she sang and prayed. Here alone she enjoyed peace ; her husband respected the privacy of this apartment ; her sister-in-law shunned it as a kind of pagan shrine.

She went immediately to the window and opened the casement. She saw her father but a little way off, walking down the avenue, clenching his hands. She tried to call him, but her voice only whispered ; she waved her handkerchief, but he did not look round ; she flung herself upon the bed, sobbing bitterly, with her head upon her arm.

When this paroxysm had passed away, she thought over the scene which had just passed, and shuddered with horror at herself. She gazed with frightened eyes into the abysses of her own heart. She did not reproach herself with what she had done, but with the manner in which it had been done. Could she not have refused to become his accomplice without so bitterly accusing and renouncing him in

public? Had she not done wrong in refusing to forgive him? She confessed to herself that she had been influenced less by honesty than by motives of a selfish pride. She had wished to show these people that she was different from him; that if he was base, she was pure: and so instead of acting as mediator between her father and her husband, she had played the part of a public accuser, hired by her own vanity. She had poured out upon him all the gall that had been accumulating within her since the day of her unhappy marriage. But most of all did she blame herself for her last outburst of passion. Why had she refused to forgive him? She felt her cheeks redden when she thought of this. It was because he had made her give up Eugenio. But was it just to blame him for that? Had he not proved that Eugenio was unworthy of her; that he had deceived her, and laughed at her to another woman? She had the right to reproach her father with this marriage, but for the rupture which had occasioned it, ought she not to thank him? But no; the more she thought and analysed her thought, the longer she knelt at this stern self-confessional, the more alarmed she became at the state which her

mind was in. She found that she could pardon her father more readily for having swindled her husband than for having exposed to her Eugenio's deceit. Ah, what a strange thing is a woman's heart! How it defies and struggles with and stifles her poor weak brain! In the midst of her contrition she began to yearn that it had been Eugenio who had knelt before her, and implored her to forgive him. She hated herself; she fought with herself; she yearned to scourge herself that she might exercise by pain that sinful and delicious thought. Then she knelt before the sad and tortured Mother, and prayed to her for help. Those gentle eyes did not look down on her in vain. For her a spirit dwelt beneath the paint, unseen but not unfelt. They soothed her and consoled her: her grief abated as the waves fall when the sirocco folds its wings. She drank in draughts of heaven from those eyes. They resembled those of the Madonna of the Shrine. Sometimes this resemblance troubled her; she would be reminded of the oath which she had taken, and which was partly the cause of her unhappy life. But this time, if the memories were sad, it was a sadness so tender and so subdued that it was sweeter

than a joy. She thought of her girlhood and her dreams of art. Once more she was in the little cottage on the hill; and Florence lay smiling in the vale beneath, and the golden sun was sinking in the sky, and the air was perfumed with the essence of the earth. Above her was Mary, the goddess of her early youth. Then closing her eyes that the vision might not fade, she sang—

“Ave Maria, gratia plena, Dominus tecum; benedicta tu inter mulieribus, et benedictus fructus ventris tui, Jesus. Sancta Maria, mater Dei, ora pro nobis peccatoribus nunc et in hora mortis nostræ. Amen.”

She passed some time in a state of languor, ineffable but calm, resembling that which succeeds a physical turbulence of sense, whether excited by pleasure or by pain. She determined to subdue her pride. She would write humbly to her father. She would try and be a good wife. She would no longer reject the proffered kindness of her husband's sister. Was it their fault that she had been wretched? If she could not love her husband, at least she might make him her friend.

She sat down to the table and wrote as follows :—

"My dearest Father,—To-day you did not know your little Maddalena. Misfortune has hardened her, maddened her; but never mind, dearest, she is going to be very happy. Her husband and her sister are very kind, and they will quite cure her poor little wounded heart. But you must send your medicine too, you know. You must write at once and assure her that you have forgotten all the naughty things she said to-day. And then you must make me a promise as well. Promise me that you will give up cards and something else. You know, dearest, what I mean. I had no tender eyes for you to-day, but I saw that you were looking very ill, and that your hand trembled in a strange way.

"Now it is my turn to promise something. Live quietly for a year; come and see us sometimes; and then I will put away all my pride and ask Mr. Atkins to give you some more money. Would you like to live at home and have a villa? Well, we shall see. Only write at once to your little Maddalena; tell her that you have *really* forgiven her, and that you are going to be good, and she will believe you with all her heart."

She signed this, in the English manner, *Your affectionate and dutiful daughter*, addressed it to him at the lawyer's, and put it in the bag herself. No answer came, and she suffered that punishment which, sooner or later, we receive from ourselves for all the faults which we commit. On this occasion, the instrument of Fate was Miss Jane Atkins. It was her habit to scrutinise all letters before they left the house, and this one she carried to the still-room, where she applied it to the steam which proceeded from the spout of a tea-kettle. This melted the gum of the adhesive envelope, so that she could open it without difficulty. She kept it past post-time, that she might think it over, and came to the conclusion that if the letter was sent, a good morning's work would be completely spoilt. A hundred a-year was a handsome allowance, and Restoni no doubt would be content to live on it, if not unsettled by the hope of getting more. As for the villa scheme, she disapproved of it entirely. Had the letter been sent, it might have changed the current of this story; but it went to ashes in a bed-room candlestick.

Maddalena was miserable enough after this event. She was continually haunted by those words: *You*

will not pander to my vices. Well, we shall see. The vague threat which he had uttered against her husband made her fear that he would commit—what she could not guess; but something that was dangerous and bad. She was in an eternal state of suspense and fear; often thinking that she heard steps outside the house, or on the stairs, she would steal from her husband's side to the window or the door. But from that day she changed in her behaviour to Richard and Jane Atkins. She became gentle, assiduous, almost affectionate. Her husband was really fond of her, and seemed so grateful to her for these little attentions, that she reproached herself for her previous conduct again and again.

It would perhaps have been better for Maddalena's peace of mind had she continued to keep Jane Atkins at a distance. This woman might have hated, but she would have respected her. As it was, she began to like her; and the fondness of such people is perilous, because it is based only on selfishness of the most sordid kind. Maddalena had flattered her small mind by ceding to her the dominion of the household, and by the manner in which she had mentioned her in the letter to Restoni. On finding

that Maddalena no longer repelled her advances, she wound herself closer and closer round her every day. But her flattered vanity required continual food. Ambition is as frequently found in the circle of domestic life, as in those of the outer world; the divine infernal passion which expands the breast of a Napoleon may desolate a continent and shake a world; the petty hankering after power which torments a Jane Atkins may ruin a family and lay waste a heart. The difference is only in degree.

Jane was not contented when she found that she could rule over her brother's household; she wished to rule over her brother's wife. She desired to direct all her actions; she was jealous of every thought and of every pleasure which Maddalena did not share with her. She was anxious that Maddalena should suffer from every annoyance with which she was troubled. And so Maddalena fell under the family tyranny, which is of all the worst, because it adopts the mask of affection, and opposes every struggle for liberty with tears and reproaches of unrequited love.

Maddalena was indifferent, and therefore pliable. The trifles which make up the lives of so many

women were nothing to her. She ate and drank what Jane thought was best for her health ; she suffered herself to be instructed in plain needlework ; she read, or pretended to read, the books which Jane gave her ; she played, from a chapel hymn-book, the tunes which Jane liked ; and dressed in the manner which Jane thought most becoming. All this involved an amount of small hypocrisy which would have been painful to a man, but which cost women nothing. However, Maddalena was rapidly losing her liberty ; she found it difficult to escape to the solitude of her little room ; where she could indulge in reveries and prayers, and where she could play and sing the music which she loved. Jane, although she had never yet entered the room, had very frequently tapped at the door.

Cloyed like a Lothario with easy conquests, Miss Atkins longed for something which would offer obstacles to her desires. Then she was seized with a grand idea,—she would convert Maddalena to the Protestant religion.

In order to prepare the way, she redoubled her attentions to Maddalena ; she spoke to her always in a tender pathetic tone of voice ; she talked to her

about Restoni, whom she pitied and praised ; she bedaubed her with nauseous flatteries, like the serpent, which covers with saliva the victim which it is about to devour. But, sometimes unable to entirely subdue the real petulance and peevishness of her nature, she would put out her claws as if in spite of herself, and when she felt lonely, would chide Maddalena for having deprived her of society.

I have already observed that Miss Atkins, although parsimonious and severe, was by no means indifferent to the company of her fellow creatures. In London she had been in the habit of moving in a large and busy circle of serious friends. On coming to Vachell she had raised her eyes to county society. She had resolved that her brother should neglect nothing to make himself popular. The rector had called upon them, had spoken to them about his parish, and had shown them over the church. There was no dissenting chapel in the neighbourhood, and it never entered the reverend gentleman's head that the new squire could belong to any church but that which had been established by the state. The Atkinses did not deceive him ; when they saw the immense pew beneath the pulpit, where they would be enthroned as the

patrons of the parish ; when they saw how completely they would lose the respect of the pastor of their tenants, and probably of all their neighbours, by refusing to go to church, they wisely abandoned their scruples and became Anglicans. The prayer-book puzzled them sadly at first, and their first sacrament was very trying, but they came through the ordeal in triumph. The rector little suspected that they had never been held over a font. She also made her brother buy a carriage and a pair of horses, —a carriage, which in London is a luxury, is a necessary in the country. In this they drove into the town on afternoons. She made him subscribe to the Hunt and various other local funds. Their arrival in the county having thus been advertised, she would spend her afternoons at the drawing-room windows waiting for visitors to appear. But none came. Whenever a carriage appeared, which was but rarely, it turned off at the lodge gate on the Reading or Oxford road, having made her heart beat high in vain. September brought all the gentry down into the country. She could hear their guns popping in every direction ; they followed their birds into the Vachell turnips, but they did not deign to

call at the house. Jane Atkins lost her temper under all these trials ; she reproached her brother for having married a singer.

“What is the consequence ?” she cried ; “you have shut yourself out of all decent society. You have spent fifty pounds on a pack of dogs and red-jackets, and have made yourself ridiculous in a hundred other ways.”

But when she insinuated to Maddalena that her profession had caused them to be tabooed, the former replied haughtily,

“You are mistaken, madam ; there must be some other reason. In this very county a gentleman of property married a lady who was originally a singer. She is a leader of fashion, not only in the county but in the best society of London ; and I might mention other instances.”

Jane did not reply ; she liked her none the better for this retort, and it was with some difficulty that Maddalena healed the wound which she had inflicted on her vanity. Miss Atkins had one of those unhealthy minds in which every scratch festers.

She was, however, convinced that she had been mistaken, and at length she determined to speak

with the rector on the subject. This good man, who had been questioned by the neighbouring squires about the Vachell people, and who was in their confidence, replied,


“Well, you see, madam, all the gentry round here are Tories, and your husband was once a Liberal member. In these parts they are very hot about politics.”

Jane returned and ridiculed her brother for his Parliamentary ambition, to which she traced all the calamities of his life. “But if that is all,” she said, “we will make them come round. Next time you shall vote for the Tories.”

Atkins shook his head.

“They won’t want my vote,” he said. “They have returned three Conservatives in this county the last two elections without any opposition at all. Besides, Parliament is not likely to be dissolved for two years yet to come.”

She had a last hope. “All the proprietors round here are magistrates,” she said, “and deputy-lieutenants, too.” Some of them have less land than you. You must get put on the commission ; you will sit at the same table with a dozen of your neighbours twice



a month, besides meeting all the people of the county at the Quarter Sessions and the Grand Assizes. If you have any tact at all, you cannot fail to make some acquaintances."

Atkins wrote to the Lord-Lieutenant, whose secretary replied that he would be appointed a Justice of the Peace if he would forward a petition, signed by the neighbouring gentry, to the effect that a magistrate was required in that district. The fact was that Atkins had bought himself into an exclusive neighbourhood. There were many parts of England where he would have found himself in his own element—a commercial aristocracy. But this district of Oxfordshire had been disfigured and enriched by no railways, mines, or manufactures. It was inhabited by the genuine country gentry, a race which in England is slowly dying out. Their escutcheons were stained by no base and moneyed alliances; with bluer blood in their veins than three-fourths of the titled families in England, they lived in their ancient manor-houses, and ruled over a peasantry who still preserved for them the faith of the feudal ages. But still their power was ebbing away. Many of them were poorer than their tenant-

farmers; but still they strove to preserve their prestige as they had preserved their pride; and maintained the majesty of monarchs though fallen from their thrones.


And well might they be proud. The money-mongers may pretend to despise ancient and honourable birth, but it is one of those few things which they cannot buy. They can purchase titles, lands, seats in the House of Commons, beautiful and high-born wives; but they cannot purchase that pleasure which is one of the noblest that a man can enjoy.

Who can walk in an ancient room and look up at the pictures of his ancestors upon the walls—or read their names in old chronicles or time-stained tablets, or scratched with a diamond upon a pane of antique glass—or walk under the immense trees which they planted, or pore over the parchment letters which they wrote long ago—or receive the blessing of some retainer grown grey in the service of the house, without feeling his breast swell, and his eyes fill? If a man has a grain of good in his nature, this will make it germinate within him. He will strive to add honour to an honoured name, to

restore the fortunes of his family if it be fallen, to maintain them if it be high.

Well, these Oxfordshire *codini* regarded the intruder with a feeling of dislike and almost of fear. They regarded him as the first of a race who, wielding golden weapons, would drive their sons or their grandsons from their native soil. Besides, they could not afford to entertain as he would entertain; they felt no desire to be outshone. So they passed with a sigh the house where the Vachells had once lived, and which still bore, as if in mockery, their name.

Thus the Atkinses were thrown entirely upon clergymen and gentlemen farmers for their society. The latter class Miss Atkins disclaimed; and she derived little pleasure from the country curates with their huge appetites and penchant for athletic sports, and their distaste for religion on week-days. She had her household, her poultry, and her kitchen garden, and Maddalena's soul to look after, and thus her time was tolerably well filled up. But Atkins, who had always led so industrious a life, began to suffer from the want of an occupation. When he had finished the "Dog Star" in the morning, he was at a loss how to pass the time. He was fond of his



wife, and she considered it her duty to amuse him ; but what could she do ? There was not a subject in common between them. There was not a topic on which they could converse. He thought that he would like to farm. Every Cockney supposes that he can jump into a knowledge of farming—the mere elements of which are scarcely to be mastered in a lifetime. Luckily for his pocket the lease of his own lands had five years to run, and there was no farm to be let near Vachell. Since he knew nothing of field sports, never read books, and did not care for music, —since, in fact, like many men of business, he had neither tastes nor acquirements, he was forced to saunter about the grounds with his hands in his pockets, and his head crouched between his shoulders. Soon his health became visibly impaired ; even the country people remarked the strangeness of his aspect ; his fixed glassy eyes, his puffed-out, bloated face, and a peculiarity in his gait.

In the meantime Miss Atkins had opened the campaign. At first she had asked Maddalena to read with her portions of the Bible, and had been astonished when she immediately acquiesced. Ignorant as most Protestants, she had believed that the

Bible is withheld from all Catholics by the priests, and was astonished when she heard that a translation is circulated in Italy under the authority of the Church. She was also surprised when Maddalena consented to attend service regularly in the parish church. But Maddalena's first visit had dissipated any scruple which she could have had. She found that the Common Prayer-Book was little else than an abbreviation of the missal; that instead of an altar there was a table; instead of fine music to good Latin, indifferent tunes to a parody of the Psalms; that it was in fact the Catholic service in a distorted and incomplete form; and that the parish church bore much the same relation to a Catholic cathedral as a brick house to a Gothic palace.

Miss Atkins then discoursed long and earnestly upon the false doctrines of the Papistry, and the abominations of the "Scarlet Lady." She attempted to prove to Maddalena that she was an idolatress, and could not possibly be saved unless she "turned." She assailed her with controversial works from Nisbet's; gave her Fox's Book of Martyrs, and a history of the Reformation. To these she added those little tracts which contain the confessions of escaped nuns

&c., and are filled with obscenities which would be tolerated in no other publication.

All this, without convincing Maddalena, disturbed her peace of mind. Religion, her best consolation in her wretched life, became a source of fresh anxiety and trouble. Her faith was shaken, though it was not overthrown.

At this crisis she received a letter, which she gave to her husband to read. It was from Darlington, who informed her that he was examining the sanitary arrangements of villages in the country; he was about to visit that part of Oxfordshire; would her husband afford him some assistance? After a little discussion between Atkins and his sister, it was arranged that the Doctor should be invited to Vachell Court; and in a few days he came.

Atkins was glad of this visit, which lasted three days. It occupied him. He and Maddalena, with the steward, accompanied Darlington over the thirty cottages on the estate. The Doctor then began to understand why rheumatism attacks labourers almost without exception. They found holes in the roofs through which the rain dripped upon the beds. They found chinks in the walls through which

one could look out on the landscape, and through which the winter winds blew in. The windows were only half of glass ; the other panes were filled with brown paper and rags. Sometimes there were chasms in the bed-room floors from a missing plank, which endangered the lives of the children in the house, This state of thing is very common in the agricultural districts. It is explained by the word *repairs*, of which landlords have such terror. These cottages with their petty rents cost more than they bring in ; a steward in his master's interest does not recommend repairs till economy demands it ; the house is patched up only to save the expense of rebuilding : till that period arrives the health of the inmate suffers. Atkins, like most landlords, especially the new ones, had never seen a cottage bed-room ; he was shocked, and gave liberal orders to the steward, who was surprised that flesh and blood should be considered in an affair of bricks and mortar. So were the cottagers themselves, who, having for the first time found some one to listen to their real grievances, began directly to fabricate false ones. Darlington asked Maddalena if she had been in the habit of visiting the tenants. She had never thought

of doing so. He told her that she ought to teach in the school sometimes, and to go round to all the cottages, comfort those who had troubles, and take little dainties to those who were sick. She was delighted to find that she could do good ; she made in his company a tour of charity ; she found that she could delight the old dames of the village if she would consent to listen to them ; and if she would read the Bible to them now and then ; and sometimes, to those that were sickly, send down a little broth or beef-tea from the "Great House." Darlington gave her some recipes and useful hints, and the titles of some books on nursing and domestic medicine. As he was about to go, Maddalena made him walk with her in the garden, and confided to him her troubles about religion, and the persecution she suffered from her sister-in-law.

Darlington did not reply for some time. Then he said :—

"My dear girl, I see that this lady's arguments have made you doubt. But have they drawn you towards her own religion ?"

"No, no," said Maddalena. "If this goes on I might cease to be Catholic, but I could never become

a Protestant. How can I cling to a branch when I desert the tree? Sometimes I think for a little while that I have been brought up to believe in a corrupted creed. But soon all my faith pours back upon me. I pity poor Jane who does not believe in the Holy Virgin, and I kneel down and pray for her."

Darlington smiled at the idea of both these women praying for each other. But he soon became serious again. "Do not be troubled," he said, "about what Miss Atkins says. She says that your ceremonies have been copied from the Pagans. But baptism and confirmation, the doctrines of the Trinity, of heaven and hell, were originally Pagan. She says that your priests massacred Protestants: she has related to you the horrors of the Inquisition. But in those days the Protestants perpetrated similar atrocities. However, in order to argue with her on an equal footing, you would have to study a library of works which your Church has published. But this would be a tedious and not very elevating study. All controversy is a profanation of religion."

"What shall I do then?" Doctor.

"Refuse to listen to her. Be gentle, but be firm.

Tell her as you have told me, that you can never become a Protestant, and request her never to speak to you of these things again."

"I fear that she will hate me."

"Which is better, that she should hate you, or that you should despise yourself?"

"I will do as you advise me. But what are you, my friend—you are not a Protestant?"

"No, I am not a Protestant."

"Then you are a Catholic," cried Maddalena, clapping her hands.

Darlington smiled. "What I am," he said, "you could not understand now. You must be contented to know that I have a religion, and that I have suffered for it. Now let us go in."

The next day was a Friday. Maddalena refused as usual to touch meat. Miss Atkins pressed her to break through her rule. Maddalena said that she could not do so without a dispensation.

Jane ridiculed her, and asked why. Maddalena replied [that the Catholic Church had ordained Friday as a fast because our Lord had been crucified on that day. The English Church, she said,

keeps this fast once a year; but we keep it once a week."

Jane Atkins became satirical, in a weak and bitter way. Leaving the question of Friday and fasting she ran over the whole gamut of Protestant polemics; and at last became abusive, and, as Maddalena considered, blasphemous.

She became pale, and said: "Jane, I have determined to hear no more of this. I shall never become a Protestant; and I shall listen to you no more. Never speak to me of these things again."

"But I must speak of them," cried Jane. "I shall be held responsible for your immortal soul, if I do not try to save it before it is too late."

"You have nothing to do with my soul," said Maddalena, angrily, "and I will thank you to mind your own business."

"My dear Maddalena!" cried Atkins, who was getting very much excited.

"Never mind, Richard, never mind," said Jane, weeping, "I will bear anything for the Lord's sake."

"Mr. Atkins," said Maddalena, coldly, "you know the stipulations under which the Father married us: I was to be free to exercise my own religion without

opposition ; and the children, if we had any, were to be brought up in the same faith."

"Oh, Richard, Richard!" cried his sister, "you have bartered away your children's souls."

"He would not marry us without, my dear," was Richard's weak apology. "They always stipulate for that."

"You will therefore have the kindness to tell your sister to leave me alone about my religion. I have no objection to go to your Church, and to teach the children in the school what you please. I do not think that is wrong. Dr. Darlington did not think it was. But he said that the Protestants were quite as bad as the Catholics had ever been."

Miss Atkins dried her eyes and gave a malicious smile.

"Oh, now I understand," said she.

"What do you understand?" said Maddalena.

"I suppose that was what you hid yourself in the shrubbery to talk about."

"We did not hide ourselves in the shrubbery that I am aware of," said Maddalena, whose eyes began to flash ; "we went there to talk about the persecutions I have received from you—that was all."

"You are not aware, perhaps, that I could see you all the while from my window?"

"As we did not wish to hide ourselves, we did not care whether you chose to play the spy on us or not."

Atkins was pacing quickly up and down the room, sometimes vainly trying to soothe the combatants.

"I saw your tender parting," said Jane.

"What do you mean, madam?"

"I need not explain to you what you already know, but I shall tell my brother what sort of a woman he has married."

Maddalena was speechless from astonishment and rage.

"What do you think, Richard, of a wife who brings her lover down here under the ridiculous pretence of inspecting cottages, and who takes long walks with him under the pretence of charity, and lets him kiss her in the shrubbery under the pretence of religion?"

Maddalena sprang up and said, "Mr. Atkins, after such an insult, such a calumny as this, either your sister or I must leave the house. I would rather

that I left it, if you please, for I am not happy here, and I can get my own living on the stage."

But Atkins's eyes were fixed on the opposite wall. His lips were blue; his face expressed agony and fear: he slowly raised his hand and pointed at something before him. "It is coming," he said.


"Leave the room, I implore you!" cried Jane to Maddalena. Then seeing that she was too stupefied to move, she seized her round the waist with a pair of thin but sinewy arms, carried her bodily out of the room, set her down in the hall, saying, "For God's sake go to your own room," cried out in a shrill voice, "John, the ice!" and ran back.

Maddalena went to her little room. A quarter of an hour afterwards she heard her husband enter his chamber accompanied by Jane and the butler. She slipped down to the dining-room, hoping to find there some explanation of this extraordinary scene. She noticed nothing at first, but as she was going away her eye caught sight of a stain upon the carpet close to the place where Atkins had sat. She stooped down and examined it closely. *It was blood!*

CHAPTER II.

BADEN-BADEN is a paradise, and a description of it always resembles a prospectus. It is certainly one of the most beautiful places in the world. It nestles, in a miniature valley, watered by the sparkling little Oos, perfumed by meadows, which are almost gardens, shaded by groves and avenues of stately elms, and encircled by lofty forest-covered hills. Anywhere else these would be the cause of eternal rain; but here, though they attract the clouds, the winds are ingeniously arranged to drive them instantly away. Showers are frequent, storms are rare; the climate is a constant April. Nature comes with a watering-pot and sprinkles the trees and flowers every day.

Baden has the size and rural aspect of a village, but the population of a large town. At certain hours the promenades display a crowd which rivals



those of Hyde Park or the Bois de Boulogne. The stranger looks down at a cluster of houses, and wonders where all these people sleep. The mystery is explained by the number and magnitude of the hotels, where visitors are packed like soldiers in a barrack. The world proper of Baden is supplied from the Faubourg St. Germain and Belgravia, from Bloomsbury and the Chaussée d'Antin. Its world improper is less numerous than at Hombourg and Wiesbaden, and has an elegance and splendour of its own. Here one comes in contact with the cream of vice, there only with its scum. Here the escroc plays in kid gloves, there his hands are bare and usually unwashed. Here a duchess may get ideas from the dress of a lorette; there she blazes in loud colours, and wears coarse rouge upon her cheeks. Baden-Baden is a lady; her sisters are bourgeois and snobs.

From all parts of the town there may be seen a large white building, with a portico in the style of the Renaissance, supported by eight yellow columns. It stands on the top of a gently sloping hill, laid out in grass-plots and flower-beds; lined with shops which are scarcely larger than booths at a fair, but

which glitter with the wealth of the Bouvelards, and which are stored with the treasures of local produce, such as the toys of Nuremberg, the cuckoo-clocks of the Black Forest, and the woollen goods of Saxony. On the front of the white building is printed in large letters the word *Conversation*. You cross a broad gravel walk where the world promenades, while music is played to them from a gold and green kiosque; you mount into the portico, and pass into the grand salon. It is of great size, and splendidly fitted up with mirrors, lustres, and musicians' galleries. The floor is a dark and delicate parquetric; the walls are covered by Riguier in the Louis Quatorze style, with cupids, flowers, and arabesques. Here the solitary traveller can lounge in luxury on red velvet, or friends can cluster their chairs together and converse. For a short time you may be deluded into the belief that the word on the wall outside is the true sign of the entertainment to be found within. But presently you hear a little chink—chink—chink, and a low monotonous voice saying something which you cannot hear, but which seems to be always the same. You stroll up and down the salon; you pass a door

from which a hot gaseous breath pours out upon you like a flame-blast from a furnace. You catch a glimpse of dark figures stooping over shaded lamps. You enter and find yourself in one of the *salles de jeu*. You discover that in a corner of this paradise M. Benazet keeps a hell.

Among the hedge of faces which at all hours enclose the table of roulette and rouge-et-noir were those of Lorini and Jenoure. The latter spoke :

“An atrocious cynic has said that to render heaven perfect one ought to be able to see the damned writhing in agony beneath. The idea is good, though borrowed from the Shipwreck of Lucretius. Now I will improve upon it. Imagine that the people in the first place owed their happiness to the follies of the people in the second, and had the pleasure of looking on at them besides. Such is our position here. We have an agreeable club where both sexes meet for *Conversation* ; we have a reading-room with all the newspapers ; we have delicious music three times per diem ; we have capital roads in the neighbourhood if we wish to ride and drive ; and if we want a day's shooting we only go to Pluto, who will give us permission, get us a

licence, and lend us guns and ammunition : and all without spending a single sou ! This club is built, these musicians are paid, these roads are laid down with the blood and brains of the idiots whom we have the additional pleasure of seeing and studying here. Now, what would man do if he were a philosopher ? He would calmly enjoy all these pleasures, and he would come to the tables now and then to smile at human folly, and write down reflections in his memorandum-book. But man is not a philosopher, because he cannot be content. I have read the "Times" for nothing. I have listened to the music for nothing ; but I want to have my dinner for nothing ; I put down a louis on the red, and I—well, I win as it happens. Come, we will dine at the restaurant next door."

"Another thing," continued Jenoure, as they sat down to table ; "because I have won a little, I ask a friend to dinner ; I increase my expenses ; you consent to dine with me when I win, because it is the Bank's money we spend ; but if you were to say to me, 'Dine with me to-day because you have lost !' I should feel insulted. Gambling teaches many a young man to be extravagant ; money which

men rake up from green cloth goes as lightly as it seems to come."

When they were again at the tables, Lorini said : " You have come here to study the passions, but where are they ? I have watched everybody pretty closely, but beyond a twitch of the lips, or an upraised eyebrow, or a foot tapped against the floor, I have discovered nothing. A man did thump the table just now after he had lost a thaler, but look at that old gentleman playing with rouleaux, and at that woman with the pile of gold before her. Can you see any passion there ? "

" The suppression of feeling is in itself a fine study," replied Jenoure, " but I have already observed more than you would suppose."

When they returned to the hotel, Jenoure made a rapid sketch.

" Is that a study ? " asked Lorini.

" Yes," said Jenoure.

" Show it me ? "

" I will some day," he replied.

" Have you played yet ? " said the Baroness to Eugenio, one afternoon.

" No," said he ; " I mean to be a philosopher."

"Well," she said, giving him a note, "go and play for me, and come back precisely in an hour's time."

Lorini went into the roulette-room, without understanding the game in the least. He saw an expanse of green cloth divided into thirty-six little squares, each of which contained a number, and with a few larger ones marked, *pair, impair, passe, manque, rouge, noir, &c.* He observed that almost everyone staked upon a number. Having changed his note, he placed a heap of gold upon the 23. The croupier pushed back some of the pieces, leaving twelve louis on the number, and cried *maximum!* In the centre of the table was a kind of well, from the centre of which rose the handle of a brass wheel; this wheel was turned by a man, who said in a sepulchral tone, "*Messieurs, faites votre jeu.*" At the same time he sent a little white ball spinning round in a circular groove; in a minute or so it fell from the groove into the bottom of the well, and dancing about among thirty-six little holes, each of which contained a colour, and a number corresponding with those upon the table. At the same time, the man cried, "*Rien ne va plus.*" The ball settled into a hole. The croupier cried, "*Vingt-trois*

rouge, impair et passe. A little buzz went round the table, and covetous eyes were fixed on Lorini's gold. A mass of notes and louis were pushed towards him. He put them into his pocket with an air of equanimity, but secretly perplexed. The 23 came up a second time. At this was a roar of laughter, and exclamations in all the languages of Europe. A gentleman who stood by Lorini saw that he was ignorant of the game, and explained to him that a stake on a number was paid thirty-six times its amount. He had therefore won 864 louis. "You had better withdraw your *mise*," he said, "the 23 is not likely to come up again." Lorini took his advice, put 500 louis aside, and played boldly on the colours. He was so successful that before the end of the hour the superintendent had rung a bell, and a little boy had brought a bag of rouleaux to replenish the bank. His last stake was a maximum 7000 francs on the red, which he won. He then left the room with a fortune in his pocket, passed through a whispering crowd assembled in the grand assembly-room, and returned to the villa. The Baroness was lying on a sofa; he covered her with bank notes and louis d'ors.

"This is Jupiter and Danaë revived," said Jenoure.

The Baroness sprung up, dripping with gold, and cried, clapping her snowy little hands, "Do this for yourself, mon cher, and you will not find the season at Paris severe." Lorini did not answer, but his eyes flashed. Jenoure subdued a smile.

The next time that they went together to the tables, Lorini made his friend explain to him the principles of roulette, and listened patiently to a dissertation on the different chances of the game, and on the different theories which had been brought to bear upon them. The next day Jenoure found him reading a little pale-green book, the cover of which represented a goddess seated on a large wheel, while from each hand was showering a stream of gold, and over whom was written the device—*Glück gedenke mein.*

That same evening as they were promenading before the Conversation-House, Jenoure having stopped to speak with an English friend, missed his companion, and traced him to the roulette-room, where he found him winning largely on his own account.

Pleasure had begun to pall upon Lorini. Had he never met with Maddalena, he would doubtless have always lived on enjoying these dinners without digestion, these intimacies without friendship, and these liaisons without love, which constitute social life. He would have been contented with the caresses of the boudoir, and the flatteries of the salon. He would have married, and in his old age have intrigued with the world for his children, as in his youth he had intrigued for himself. But that twelve-month of love had spoilt him for society; it had made fibres vibrate within his heart, which now lay dormant and unstrung, but which ere they wasted quite away, at times beat fiercely within him. He no longer enjoyed the bustle of an elegant crowd with its brilliant lights, its hum of flirtation, and its atmosphere of perfumes. He was no longer satisfied with Olga's embraces; in vain he looked into her eyes for the soft deep light of love; in vain he listened in her voice for that tender, tremulous tone which in another's voice he had known so well; in vain he hoped to feel in the mad raptures of passion that electric thrill which a look from Maddalena had often been sufficient to excite. As men in their

middle age sometimes spend a night among the gaieties of town, and are disgusted with those pleasures which delighted them in their youth, so Eugenio returned to his former life, but as a different man.

When he had heard that Maddalena was married, he had laughed, and said, "She is like all the others, then." Another time he had said, "I am glad of it. She has disenchanted me now ; otherwise I might have regretted her." He deceived the penetration of Jenoure, who supposed that he was quite cured. Indeed, he deceived himself. But the memory of Maddalena was always alive within him : it was a poison in his heart, which sometimes slept, but which broke out from time to time ; which lay torpid when his mind was engaged, but which tortured him when he was thoughtful and alone, in his mid-day reveries, or in the long and solitary hours of the night. At last, like those who suffer from a painful malady, he did not dare to be alone. He spent his nights with his mistress, his days with the world. Yet even this could not always save him from his thoughts. He became silent and abstracted in the midst of company. The embraces even of

Olga reminded him of his old love ; once he called her Maddalena by mistake ; and often closing his eyes, he would strain her to his breast, and glue his lips to hers, whispering to himself, " It is Maddalena that I hold within my arms."

Lorini required an opiate to stifle this eternal agony. Society was a medicine which, at first efficacious, had lost its power upon his mind. But he found another at last. As a traveller who sees a prairie-fire rolling on him, tears up the grass all round with shuddering hands, sets it in a blaze and crouches in safety on the blackened ground, encompassed by smoke and flames — so Lorini opposed poison to poison, passion against passion. He became a gambler, and for the second time forgot that Maddalena had ever existed in his life.

He passed rapidly through the three first stages of this fatal mania. First is the stage of timidity : the gambler plays with caution and without hope ; he knows that the odds are heavily against him ; he wins, and passes into the stage of confidence. Then he believes that he is endowed with second sight ; that for him the laws of nature are subverted, and that chance stands still ; he plays recklessly, and

begins to lose ; he passes into the stage of fury ; spits impotently against the Fates, and is only restored to reason when the whole of his winnings are sucked back into the Bank.

But Lorini paid as interest to this loan all the money which he had in the world.

"What will you do now?" asked Jenoure.

"I will sell my lands and villa," he replied ; "and when I have broken this cursed bank I will buy them back."

"Be content to mortgage them, and live economically for a few years. That is the best way of winning back your money."

"It is too slow. Besides, I like playing," he said, with a bitter laugh. "It amuses me."

Jenoure shrugged his shoulders, reflected for a few moments, and gave Lorini the address of a money-lender in the town. Lorini had a little hesitation in stating his case ; but his man met him more than half-way, knowing very well what his business was before he came. He had even written to Florence to make inquiries. At Baden those who play high are studied. Their gains and losses are known to everyone, and form the staple subject of

conversation. As the money-lender was taking notes of Lorini's statements, a letter was brought in. He read it twice, raised his eyebrows, and glancing at Lorini, said, "It has just occurred to me, Monsieur le Marquis, that I know of a party who wishes to buy land round Florence. Have you thought of any price? These affairs are usually settled by valuation; but, as I presume you wish to lose no time——"

"Exactly," said Lorini; "I wish the affair to be despatched as soon as possible."

"Name a price, then, and if it be reasonable my man will pay it down."

Lorini named a sum which he thought would be sufficient to pit against the capital of the bank. He made sure of being able to pay it back; and reserved the right of repurchase during the next six months. Thus it cost him no struggle to part with the family estate; he regarded it as virtually a mortgage though professedly a sale.

The money-lender thought that there would be no difficulty in introducing this reservation, and said, "There is also one stipulation, which my client wishes to make. He desires (I believe from political

reasons) that his name should be kept a secret. His name, therefore, will not be filled up till after you or your man of business have read the papers over. Do you agree to this ?”

“I will agree to anything,” said Lorini, with the sublime indifference of the gambler. Then he added, “It will not take long, I hope ?”

“My clerks shall work all night, Monsieur le Marquis ; and to-morrow, at this hour, the money and the bill of sale shall be ready for you.”

Lorini thanked him, and took up his hat to go with a hesitating air.

“If Monsieur le Marquis wishes a sum in advance, we can let him have it—at the usual rate of interest.”

Lorini’s face brightened up. “Then let me have a few thousand francs,” said he. “Who knows,” thought he, as he walked off, stuffing the notes into his pocket, “perhaps I might break the bank to-day, and not have to sell my vineyards after all.”

“I have contrived to do a little business on my own account,” muttered the usurer, and read the letter over again. “*So !* This is the most extraordinary affair that I have had yet in Baden, where all

is extraordinary. But there is still the old palace. Perhaps I may be able to get that for myself."

The next day Lorini presented himself punctually at the office, signed his name at the foot of a sheepskin document, and received a bundle of notes in exchange. He then repaid the sum which he had borrowed the day before (*plus* a heavy interest), and walked quickly towards the Conversation House.

At Baden you may easily pick out the inveterate gambler; in a place where all other people saunter, he strides along, looking straight before him, like a city man in London walking to his office.

He now passed into the fourth stage. He began to gamble on a system; he regulated his irregularities, and methodised his vice. This is the highest effort of dissipation; it seizes the weapons and resources of a virtue.

Every morning, escaping from the villa by one of those tortuous and sheltered alleys with which Baden is conveniently encircled, he met Jenoure at Chevet's, where they breakfasted together. At a quarter before eleven he entered the roulette-room, and seating himself on a sofa amused himself by watching the opening of the Bank. Two valets

with flushed faces and straining arms would bring in an enormous box, which they placed upon a chair. The croupiers would take their seats. The superintendent having opened the box, would seat himself at the table with paper, pen, and ink. Piles of notes would be taken out, counted, and deposited in layers in the bank. Delicate looking rolls of gold pieces in pink paper would be set free, and massed together. Huge sausage-rolls of thalers and double florins would fall clashing on the table, and ranged in long lines upon the green cloth. The superintendent having registered everything, would depart. The croupiers would take up their rakes; the lid would be taken off the roulette well, that gulf which has swallowed so many fortunes, and as eleven struck musically from a Louis Quatorze clock, the white ball would be sent slowly round, and in a low, dreamy tone, the "*Messieurs, faites votre jeu,*" and the "*Rien ne va plus,*" would be droned forth.

As if summoned by these magical words, and by the click of the marble in its brass circus, half-a-dozen men would draw up to the table, and take their seats. These were the genuine gamblers—

men who spent their existence over gold and green cloth, and in whose faces those tints appeared to be reflected. Their complexions were livid ; their features calm and compressed ; their eyes unnaturally bright. They had cards before them, and punted carefully ; they staked high sums, but at rare intervals. There was one exception,—an old gentleman,—who played upon the numbers, and half covered the table with gold pieces every time.

Lorini played from eleven till three ; then rode on horseback with Jenoure, or sometimes paid the Baroness a formal visit, till five. At that hour they dined at the table d'hôte in the *Cour de Bade*. At seven he returned to the roulette-room, where a chair was always reserved for him, and played till midnight, when the tables closed. He then walked up to the villa, where Olga secretly admitted him ; and where Julie served them with a *recherché* supper. If he had won, he was gay and sparkling ; made Olga describe Paris, and chattered over the pleasures which they would there enjoy. If he had lost he was moody and sullen ; often refused to eat or drink, and was not to be cheered

or softened by one of the most captivating of her sex.

"This man is brutalised, Julie," said the Baroness one day; "but he may yet win a fortune."

"I fear not, madam," said the soubrette; "the Marchese is one of those fools whom Providence has forgotten to watch over."

"Well, well, we shall see," said her virtuous mistress; "it cannot last much longer. There is some consolation in that."

Thus Lorini gambled nine hours out of every day, and even when absent from the tables his mind was always there; even when he slept, numbers danced before his eyes, and the low droning voice chanted in his ears its melancholy eternal refrain. Sometimes he had the nightmare!—an enormous nugget of gold would pass before him; he would stretch out his hands to seize it, when it would turn to a mass of black adamant, and fall with a crushing weight upon his chest; and then it would become all red and glare before him, and he would plunge his hands into it and find it blood; and he would hear mocking voices which cried, "*Rouge gagne ! rouge perd !*"

and he would wake up bathed in sweat, and his breast quivering with pain. At such moments the mere company of a human being was an inexpressible relief; at such moments he felt afraid, like children, of being alone; and even Olga, cold-hearted as she was, sometimes felt a thrill of pity, and almost of love, for this unhappy man who shuddered at her side.

There are few who, having commenced this detestable life, leave it of their own accord. Gambling is the most ferocious passion of man; those of women and of wine are comparatively brief, and bring their own reaction. But gambling has its grandeur; it is not only an enjoyment, it is a contest. The gambler fights with a shadow; he calculates against Chance. He is animated by a hope which never dies: when he loses he sets his teeth and returns again to this unequal duel, crying, "*Death, or a fortune!*" within his heart. When he wins, when he rakes in the money, which chinks and clatters and tosses up and down, with the notes rising like foam-flakes to the top, he feels the delight of an angler who has landed a salmon after he has played it for an hour, and more than his delight, for the salmon is of gold.

Then, as the play goes on, he passes his hand through the heap that is before him ; he loves better to caress these shining pieces than a woman's soft bosom or silky hair. He looks down upon them with adoring eyes ; he reads in their faces a realisation of all his dreams, while the hum and swaying of the crowd, the chinking of the money, the voices of the croupiers, for him surpass the excitements of the wildest orgie. Thus the gambler's brain is employed ; his energy and courage are awakened ; his imagination is excited ; his senses are enraptured ; he tastes all emotions turn by turn ; he plays at SEE-SAW with a demon ; rises almost to heaven, clutches wildly at the blue sky, and, yelling, descends into the infernal gulf !

Fortune always fluctuates. More than once Lorini might have left off a rich man. But a gambler's ambition expands in proportion to his fortune ; it becomes insatiable, and knows no bounds.

He sat at the table, his last heap of gold before him. The face of the croupier appeared to him stern and remorseless as a Fate. Again that long rake was thrust forth ; again, and again, and again.

It was all gone ; he was a ruined man. He pushed back his chair. What a strange significance has that dull, scraping sound. But as he rose he felt something rustle in his pocket. It was a maximum which he had put aside as a reserve. He placed it upon the red and won.

It was night. He returned to the hotel, and went to Jenoure's room. He was not there. He recollected that the Baroness gave a supper that night, to which Jenoure had been invited. He sat down for a few moments, for he was tired, and he had not eaten for eleven hours. He had won largely in the beginning of the day, and instead of going, as usual, at three, he had remained there till nine. A large portfolio laid upon the table before him ; he opened it listlessly and turned over the drawings which it contained. Suddenly he saw a portrait of himself, and another, and another. His face reddened with rage, and he flung them upon the floor. Then he picked them up, and looked calmly into this mirror of his mind—the features of which were passions, and the expression, vice. The first study represented him looking with careless curiosity at the play, a half mocking, half wondering smile upon his lips,


In the second he had staked a louis, and was in the act of drawing away as if sure that he would lose. In the third he was passing out of the *salle-de-jeu*, with a radiant face, counting a mass of gold pieces which he carried in his hand. In the fourth he was bending over the board, his eyes fixed on the little white ball which was dancing in the well. In the fifth he was watching a pile of notes being raked in by the croupier, whose stolid face contrasted admirably with his own. In the last he was looking into the Oo's. This sketch horrified him so that he almost swooned away. He remembered that night well: he had lost almost all that he had; he was walking with Jenoure; and as they passed over the bridge he recalled with a shudder the thought which had passed through his mind. He little guessed that it had been so faithfully reflected on his face. "O God!" he cried. "My God! have mercy on me. What am I to do?"

He thrust the drawings in his breast, and went out. He climbed the hill which overlooked the town. Below him lay the accursed House blazing with light, and the crowd which passed undulating to and fro. His heart sickened at the sight. He

climbed on till he had screened it from him by a wall of foliage. Now he was alone. Looking 'round him, he saw no traces of man. Listening, he heard no sounds save the vague mysterious murmurs of the night. Kneeling down, he clasped together his moist cold hands, and cried, "O God! My God! have mercy on me! What am I to do?"

He had floated on a blue and buoyant sea, with his eyes towards the sun; but the night had come; the waters ebbed from him, and left him naked on the sand. He had wasted his life; he had forfeited his birthright; he had lost his love. "O God!" he cried. "My God! have mercy on me. What am I to do?"

Then there rose from beneath him the voices of sweet instruments. It was the Requiem of Mozart, which the Kursaal band, concealed from his sight, began to play. This music, which arose from an unseen source, appeared to him an answer to his prayer; it assuaged his bitter grief; it soothed him like a tender woman's words. He sat as if entranced; his heart swelling, and the tears falling from his eyes. And then, as he listened, ideas began to rise from the recesses of his mind, and passed to and fro, like shadows, unshaped and dim. The



creative faculty, long chained by sloth and vice, arose and rent its bonds. He was bewildered; he felt, he suffered, he desired—he knew not what. Then a grand thought burst within him into life. He sprang to his feet, his frame quivered with emotion, his brain was in a blaze.

“Divine Mozart!” he cried, stretching out his arms towards the stars, “I become thy disciple! I will labour at thy feet! I will rival thee, or die!”

His arms fell to his side; but his eyes remained fixed on the sky. He stood thus till more than two hours had passed. A clock struck twelve. He started, and said:—

“Now to finish with this life, and to-morrow to begin anew.”

He descended the hill, singing to himself the melodies which his thoughts had formed. He went to his room, unlocked a desk, made up a bundle of letters in a woman’s hand, and again passed out into the street.

* * * * *

At Baden an astonishing freedom of manners and morals prevails. Can vice really impregnate the air? Can physical contact with fair sinners at the

table d'hôte, the Kursaal, and the promenade, lay the seeds of serious incontinence, and communicate moral leprosy? Let psychology discuss this question. It is certain that at Baden ladies do not imitate the demi-mondes only in their toilettes. At Baden society suspends her criminal laws. Even scandal is silent, since she can do no one any harm; only those are talked of who behave themselves with caution and propriety. *Quand tout le monde est bossu la belle taille devient une monstruosité.*

At Baden our Baroness became a perfect little rake. Her life was a whirl of gaiety, a continual waltz. There were breakfasts at the old Schloss to the music of Eolian harps; picturesque pic-nics in the neighbourhood; *al fresco* dinners, and delicious têtes-à-têtes in those boudoirs which Nature had furnished with her own hands; balls at the Kursaal twice a week; and sometimes little suppers at her own villa, to which only a convivial coterie was invited, and at which only confidential domestics served. It was to one of these suppers that we now transfer the scene. The party consisted of ten, the sexes being equal. They were seated at a round table. The smoking meats and the delicate entremets had been

borne away. Champagne and cigarettes alone remained upon the board. The servants had retired.

At Olga's right hand sat the Vicomte de Beaumont, who had been so intimate with her at Florence. He had not been able for her sake to brave the inclemency of a London season, but had met her at Baden like Lorini, and perhaps half-a-dozen others, by the purest accident. He held a high place in her esteem, for he was the rage just then. He drove the best horses, had rented the best villa, and gave the best dinners there. He had also broken the bank, exposed a card swindler of high rank, and shot a husband in a duel on the frontier,—achievements of which he was justly proud.

At her left hand sat Jenoure, who was as well known in the Parisian as in the London world. The rest of the party it will be needless to describe. Three of the ladies were young and handsome; the other was middle-aged, but had written comedies, and was celebrated for her wit. The men were all noted for one thing or another, and the whole decade were of easy morals, but of high rank. The Baroness abhorred the middle classes.

“Where is the Marchese dei Lorini?” asked the

authoress, with an air of naïveté which made everybody smile !

The Baroness shrugged her pretty shoulders. "Oh, playing, as usual, I suppose."

"I have seen a great many men play," said Alphonse de Beaumont, "but I never saw any one play so badly as Lorini. He seems to have no self-command. You can always tell whether he is winning or losing, by his face. Then his system is altogether wrong. When he wins, he is extremely cautious ; when he loses, he becomes enraged, and heaps on money with both hands. Now, when I broke the bank, I did exactly the reverse. Fortune does not alternate—she runs in series."

"She alternates one day ; she runs in series the next," said Jenoure.

"If losing, play low," said the Vicomte ; "if winning, play high."

"I think, on the contrary," said Jenoure, "that if one has lost several times, one should stake high to win back all at a single coup."

"What game does Lorini play ?" asked someone.

"Always roulette," replied Jenoure. "I earnestly

advised him, if he would play, to take trente-et-quarante, which is a much better game."

"Certainly," said De Beaumont. "When I broke the bank it was at trente-et-quarante. Whoever broke a bank at roulette, I should like to know?"

"If anyone could do it, Vicomte, you would be the man," said Jenoure; "but the administration does not allow it. They keep up the supply at roulette, and pile bank upon bank."

"They say it is a good game," said one of the guests, "to put two louis on the douze-premier, and three on the passe. Thus you have only six figures against you."

"Pardon me," said Jenoure; "with the two zeros you have eight. You can only win one louis, and you can lose five. Lorini thought that he had found a mare's nest with that game, but gave it up after he had lost twenty-thousand francs."

"The best way, I think," said another, "is to put a louis on a colour and leave it to accumulate. If you happen to hit a series, you may win a colossal sum"

"Yes," said Jenoure; "but you may lose a colossal sum before you hit your series."

"I don't believe in any of these theories," said the third gentleman. "After all, it must be pure chance."

"No," said Jenoure, "one can scarcely say that it is pure chance. As the births of male and female children bear always the same proportion to each other in a huge population, and during a long period of time, so the red and black have been found to be equally balanced at the end of the year. The revolutions of numbers and cards perplex us, as those of the heavenly bodies perplex people who are unacquainted with astronomy. Yet we see that their results are regulated; it is for some future Galileo to discover their laws."

"Does any one believe in dreams?" asked a lady.

The negative was general.

"Well," said Jenoure. "You may believe me or not as you please; but when I was a very young man I used to have inspirations. I played by system, but sometimes a number or a colour would catch my eye. I would feel an irresistible inclination to stake upon it. I would do so, feeling as sure that I should win, as I do that I am going to drink this glass of champagne"—(the Baroness drank it, and there was a laugh),—"and without being disappointed."

“That is a valuable talent ; can you command it when you please ?”

“No ; if I waited for the fairy she would not come, and she deserted me long ago.”

“When I broke the bank, I’ll tell you what I did,” said De Beaumont : “I took a pack of cards. When the croupiers shuffled theirs, I shuffled mine ; when they offered theirs to the players to cut, I offered mine to the croupiers to cut. I dealt mine before they dealt theirs, and the results were almost always the same.”

“That was the first time you made the experiment, Vicomte ?” asked Jenoure.

“Yes.”

“Well, next time you will probably find that the two results will be almost always different.”

“It is possible,” said the Vicomte ; “but there will be no next time for me. I have broken a bank—it is a thing which one ought to do, but I shall never play again.”

“You are right !” said the Baroness. “Nothing appears to me so degraded as a mind swallowed up in the passion for play.”

“Poor Lorini,” thought Jenoure ; “it is clear that

you are dethroned." Then he continued: "You have heard, I suppose, what the head-croupier said about you."

"I have not had that pleasure."

"They were laughing at him because you had broken the bank. 'Pooh!' said he, 'there is nothing we like better when our man is rich. Monsieur le Vicomte, I hear, has made a resolution never to play again. Rubbish! They all do that. But he will never forget that he has won; he may travel round the world; he may inter himself in the country with a young and virtuous wife; he may become politician, agriculturist, or philosopher; but he will be sure to come back here and lose what he has won, with a great deal more besides."

"We shall see," he replied.

"There is certainly nothing more difficult," said a guest, "than to look on the tables without playing, if one has once begun. It is like looking down into an abyss without having the vertigo. Jenoure here can do it; who else could?"

"I do it to discipline my mind," said Jenoure. "I regard it professionally, as I do a beautiful woman whom I am painting. My brain extinguishes my

passions. But it *is* difficult, especially after one has broken three banks, Monsieur le Vicomte.”}

De Beaumont talked no more about his bank, much to everyone’s relief. An old gentleman said :

“The passion for play is something by itself. You would suppose now that the croupiers at least would be free from this almighty folly. But no ; I am told that after midnight they frequently play among themselves, banking turn by turn.”

“Many of the croupiers are ruined gamblers,” said Jenoure. “But, apropos of those gentry, did you ever hear the story of the croupier’s daughter ? Well, then, it is this. Wiesbaden and Homburg, as you all know, are the hells par excellence. Here gambling is a distraction, there a pursuit ; and at these places the administration is very sedulous in attracting and retaining visitors. The reading-room, the restaurant, and at Homburg billiard-rooms also, are all beneath the same roof. A hundred petty stratagems are employed : for instance, cheap lodgings are provided for those ladies whose interest it is to retain the rich, and to make them play. Well, some years ago, either at Homburg or Wiesbaden, a man broke the bank. He determined (like you, Vicomte) not to

play again, made pastoral incursions in the neighbourhood, and announced his intention of returning home. Now, one of the croupiers had a very beautiful daughter. She was promised twenty-thousand francs if she could recover the sum that had been lost. She contrived to captivate him; they eloped together, and made a romantic, but economical, tour in Switzerland. Presently she began to dream. She saw her lover playing, and staking maximums every time, and then going from the table, his hands filled with gold. As she woke him up regularly three times every night to tell him this, he began to believe that it must be a genuine revelation, and returned to lose everything—including the croupier's daughter. The administration paid his fare home, and he has not been heard of since."

"Oh! enough of these horrid tables!" cried the Baroness. "I do not know how it is—at Baden one talks of nothing else."

"The queen has spoken, and the topic shall be changed," said Jenoure. "Now what is to be done?"

"Dance one of those charming cotillons," said the authoress. "I shall be most happy to play for you."

“Yes, yes!” they all cried, starting up. “The champagne cotillon! the champagne cotillon!”

Olga glided over to the authoress, and arched her beautiful neck to whisper in her ear, “Is it not too soon?”

Her experienced friend glanced at the flushed faces and gleaming eyes of the guests. “It is the moment!” she said. “Come, let us begin.”

Eight chairs were set arranged in a circle, and the cotillon began. At first they danced in the ordinary manner; but the figures (which had been invented by the Vicomte and the Sackowsky) became gradually more and more bizarre; finally it broke into a graceful romp, and when they returned to their seats the space in the centre resembled a battle-field, being covered with the shreds of dresses. In the second part of the dance, at a certain period, two bottles of champagne were opened by De Beaumont and Jenoure, all glasses were filled and clinked together; and at the same time a toast was to be given.

“To all husbands who are enamoured of their wives!” cried the Vicomte. There was a laugh; the glasses were emptied, and they waltzed madly

round and round. The little Sashinka, also with a champagne-glass in her hand, skipped about by herself in a state of infantine frenzy, in a corner of the room, and sometimes dancing in among them, executed a *pas seul* in imitation of some première danseuse whom she had seen at the opera. "*Elle a la poésie dans les jambes, cet enfant !*" said her fond mother, with an approving smile.

Again the corks popped ; again four white arms, flecked with champagne froth, were held out ; again eight pair of eyes exchanged looks of liquid fire, and Jenoure, raising his glass, exclaimed, "To all wives who are not enamoured of their husbands."

The laugh ascended to a shriek of delight, and in the waltz which followed Olga's hair became unloosed, and fell down to her waist in long golden waves.

She raised it with her little hands, but a lady cried,—

"Oh, leave it, dear, you look as lovely as a Venus."

"And as dissipated as a Bacchante," said Jenoure.

"Sing *Il segreto per esser felice*," said the Vicomte, dipping his hands in her hair.

She gave him a look, and held out her glass, which he filled. They seated themselves. She stood before them and raised her glass in the air, and sang while the other played—

" Il segreto per esser felice,
So per prova, e l'insegno agli amici ;
Sia sereno, sia nubilo, il cielo.
Ogni tempo, sia caldo, sia gelo,
Scherzo e bevo, derido gl' insani,
Che si dan del futuro pensier ;
Non curiamo l'incerto domani,
Se quest' oggi n'è dato goder !"

" Wise and charming sentiments," cried De Beaumont, who had drunk too much wine. " Who cares for the morrow when the night is pleasant. Not I for one. To-morrow is an illusion, to-night is sweet reality. Wreathe the garland, fill the wine-cup, and let some fair woman kiss me on the lips."

" Come ! the next verse, Baroness ! " they cried.

Jenoure, who had been listening, sprang up and cried, " I hear a sword rattle. There is a chorus behind the scenes ! " As he spoke the folding-doors were flung open with a crash. A tall man in a grey great-coat, with the cross of St. George upon his

breast, strode into the room. His forehead was furrowed by an immense scar; his face was impressibly sinister and stern.

He stood still with his arms folded on his breast. The Baroness gave a frightened whisper, and her guests hurried out.

As soon as they were gone, she flung herself upon him, and wound her arms round his neck. "Dearest Konstantine," she cried, "how thou hast alarmed me! After five years of absence—"

"To find you thus, madam," said the General, touching her hair, and looking round at the débris of the orgie.

"It came down when I was dancing, and I was just going to ring for my maid when you came in. The tiresome hair, I wish it was all cut off. Why didst thou not write? Didst thou wish to surprise me, wicked man? But know that when one loves, these surprises sometimes kill."

"Mamma!" cried the little Sashinka, "who is that man?"

She was standing in a corner of the room with a champagne-glass still in her hand, the wine dripping from it on the floor.

"That is your dear papa. Come and kiss him, my child. Is she not lovely, Konstantine?"

"Oh, no, that is not my papa; that horrid man," said the little girl, recoiling. Then she assumed a look of defiance. "I have a much prettier papa than you."

The Baroness gave a forced laugh. "She always calls her Italian master papa. Eugenio is your other papa, is he not, my dear?"

Sashinka gave her mother a malicious look.

"No," she said; "Eugenio used to be, but Alphonse is my papa now. And I like him very much; because he is so kind to mamma, and talks to her in such a sweet, soft voice, and writes her letters—oh, so many—so many—so many—and on the seal is a little naked boy with a bow and arrow, and his finger on his lips. What does that mean, you cross big man? And what is that nasty mark you've got on your forehead? I don't like you at all, I don't."

Her mother nervously rang the bell.

"She would make a study for Garvarni; would she not, madam?" said the general, with a sneer.

Julie came in.

"Take the child to-bed," said the Baroness.

Julie carried her out, struggling.

The general took off his great-coat and sat down. His wife crept up to him, and curled her warm white arms round him, and caressed his grey moustache, and kissed him on the scar. She hung over him, and looked fondly into his eyes. Then she called him *Kostya*, and whispered something in his ear.

"Not yet," he said. "I am hungry ; I want some supper."

"Come," she said, tapping him on the shoulder ; "you shall have it up-stairs."

"Why up-stairs ? This appears to be your supper-room. Let me have it here."

"But here everything is in such disorder,

"Bah ! one does not mind that just after a campaign. Open me a bottle of wine."

"A bottle of wine !"

"Yes ; it will not be the first to-night, judging by appearances."

She opened a bottle and filled two glasses. "You will let me drink a welcome to you ?" she said.

"Certainly, my dear," said the general, with grim gaiety ; "and when that bottle is finished we will

have another." The Baroness shuddered, and glanced at the clock.

He took a cigar-case from his pocket. "I need not ask you," he said, "if you object to this. The atmosphere reminds me of a barrack-room."

He began to smoke slowly, sometimes sipping his champagne. Olga paced hurriedly to and fro.

"What is the matter?" he said. "You seem to be very restless."

"Oh, Konstantine," she said, coming to him; "this room makes me ashamed of the people I have entertained to-night. But thou canst hardly imagine what a life one is forced to lead in this horrible place."

Then she passed her velvet hand across his face with a feline gesture. "Come, dearest—to oblige me. Do not let us stay here any longer."

The general stole a look at the clock. "Well," said he, "when I have finished my cigar, I will gratify your whim. And now sit down. Why do you keep moving about like that?"

"Let me go out for a moment to order a nice supper for you."

"Order my supper! Pooh! When we go up-

stairs they can send me a chicken bone or two."

"And I want to see if the child has been put to bed. Let me go, dearest, do."

"It is now nearly half-past twelve. What does it matter if the child be in bed a few minutes sooner or later?"

"Yes—yes, it is nearly half-past twelve," said the Baroness, turning very pale. Then with a mad laugh, she sprang to the door. "I *won't* be tyrannised over," she said, with a little mutinous shake of her head. She seized the handle of the door.

He gave a stride, passed his arm round her waist, and lifted her on to his knees. "Patience!" he said. "I have told you that we will go when I have finished my cigar."

She sat there, trembling, and looking from time to time at his cigar. The clock struck half-past twelve. She started and glanced at his face. When she saw his eyes she gave a shriek and ran to the door. He sprang before it. She flew across the room towards the window, her hair drifting behind, her arms outstretched. As she placed her

hand upon the bolt, three knocks sounded on the glass from outside.

Sackowsky grasped her shoulder, which became red under his hand. "I forbid you to speak a word, madam. Open it at once."

She pushed back the bolt with a hand mottled by fear. The shutters swung back, and Lorini stepped into the room.

"I come, madam," he said, "for the last time——"

"You are right, sir," said a deep voice. "It is for the last time."

Lorini turned and saw a man standing behind him, dressed in a general's uniform, with one hand resting on the pommel of his sword. His manner instantly changed. He made a low bow, and said, with a polite smile,

"The Baron Sackowsky?"

The general bowed.

"I need scarcely say, Baron, that I am at your service."

"Will you then be so kind as to take a seat for a few moments? Let me offer you a chair. I will not detain you long." Then he turned to his wife

and said, offering her his arm, "Now, madam, I have finished my cigar."

They went up to her chamber. Julie was there. The Baron told her to leave the room, and to return when he rang. As she passed out, he whispered something to her in French. His wife had fallen on a fauteuil in a corner of the room.

"Olga Sackowsky," he said, "I confided to you the two things which I hold dearest in the world—my own honour and the innocence of my child."

"Oh, Konstantine, you believe that I am guilty," she said, flinging herself at his feet; "but——"

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Do not take the trouble to lie any more," he said. "Ivan has watched you, and I know all."

"Ah," she said, rising, "you have employed a spy then?"

"It is the best means of detecting traitors."

"Sir," replied the Baroness, haughtily, "I shall waste no more words upon you. You have for ever forfeited my esteem. You have paid a hireling to say whatever you please. That is enough for me. You have your fortune, I have mine; and you may take the child, since you are so anxious about its

innocence. We must separate, and at once, if you please."

"But it does not please me that you should dishonour my name in every capital in Europe. No, madam, we have been separated too long. In half an hour you will go back with me to Russia."

"I refuse to go."

The Baron smiled and looked at her.

"You will be made to go, madam, if I have to gag you, and bind you hand and foot."

"Tartare!" she cried, clenching her fists with rage.

The Baron made her a low bow.

"Je suis Russe, madame, et vous m'avez gratté."

Having rung the bell, he left the room. Julie came in. She had a dark dress hanging on her arm. Olga ran to her and kissed her on both cheeks.

"My dearest Julie," she murmured, in a caressing voice, "thou art my only hope. Help me to escape from this monster, and I will make thee rich. Two women can do anything."

"Possibly, madam; but in this instance there is only one."

"What! wilt thou not aid me, Julie? I will give thee five thousand francs."

Julie tossed her head.

"Then name your own price."

"Madam, I have always made it a rule in life to go to the highest bidder. The Baron is richer than you are, and I have no desire to leave his service."

"You in his service!" she cried.

"Yes, madam; and I have been for the last three months."

The Baroness saw that she was lost.

"Then you are another of his spies," she said, bitterly.

"It was you, madam, who gave me a taste for the profession, and by practising on the poor little Restoni I acquired sufficient skill to deceive even you. But time presses. I have promised my master to have you ready in half an hour. Be kind enough to let me put on this dress."

"That dress!" she cried, looking at it with horror.

"Never! never!"

"This is nonsense," said Julie, sternly. "Undress yourself at once. I have no time to lose."

"How dare you address me in that tone, impertinent wretch! I will tell my husband. I will——"

"Oh, oh," laughed Julie, "that will only further me in his good graces."

Then she seized the wrist of her late mistress, and looked imperiously in her face.

"Baroness," she said, "let us understand each other once for all. My master has placed you under my charge. You are my prisoner, and as long as I obey his orders I can treat you as I please. Five thousand francs, indeed! A fortune could not tempt me to forego the pleasure which I shall have from you. I have not forgotten all the names which you have called me when you were in a bad temper, as if I was a Russian serf. I am *your* mistress now, and my hand is no light one, you will find. Off with that dress at once, or I will tear it from your back."

The Baroness unfastened her dress with trembling hands.

"But Julie," she said, "my jewels—my dresses—"

"The Baron's servants will pack them up and follow us to St. Petersburg to-morrow. But I do not think that you will wear jewels or fine dresses

any more. No, nor long hair either. My master said that you wished yours to be cut off, and that I might have it for a chignon."

The poor woman flung herself sobbing on the bed. When she felt the cold scissors pass snapping through her hair she fainted away.

"You think, sir," said the Baron, "that I am about to challenge you to a duel à la mort. I have several reasons, however, for not doing so. In the first place, although I am the best swordsman and one of the best pistol-shots in Europe, you might kill me. The odds are a thousand to one against it; but upon that one chance rests my wife's last hope. This risk, slight as it is, I shall not incur. I wish to preserve my life, for I have a vengeance to inflict. In the second place, it would be unjust and incomplete that I should kill you, when you have done me no more harm than the Vicomte de Beaumont, and Heaven knows how many men besides. Silence, sir! I will soon convince you that I do not speak without good grounds for all I say. Thirdly, it is not you who have done me this great wrong. Had you known me, had you pretended to be my friend, had you taken

advantage of my confidence in you to do what you have done, you would have been a scoundrel, and I should have killed you like a dog. As it is, you have committed a folly, not a crime. You met a woman who, breaking the most sacred oaths, gave herself up to you. You amused yourself with her as you would have done with a courtesan, as she really is. You broke no oath, you betrayed no faith. The hour of reckoning comes, and you are ready, with a smile, to sacrifice your life for this miserable love. Oh, I know that the Lorini are brave. Your father was my friend, sir. The laws of what men call honour demand that I should fight with you; but my honour is dead. It cannot be revived by blood."

He averted his face for a moment from Lorini, who saw him shake like an oak in a strong winter wind. When he turned his face again it was calm, majestic, and stern.

"But it is right, sir, that you should be punished—punished, indeed, you have already been. I will show you how. Ivan," he cried.

"Oh, sir, before the servant," exclaimed Lorini; "you must kill me first."

"Do not be alarmed, Marchese," said the General; "this man knows everything, and he never talks. Besides, he will not be present at our conversation."

Ivan brought in a ledger, and, at a word in Russian from his master, left the room.

"That man is my spy. He has written down here all that his mistress has done, and almost all that she has said. Look through these pages, and learn that when a woman betrays her husband, she does not remain faithful to her lover. Read it, sir."

Lorini, half stupefied, half magnetized by a superior will, opened the book and glanced through its contents, which were in French. Sometimes he blushed to the temples; but presently he uttered an exclamation, and turned pale.

"You have found it, then?" said Sackowsky, with a slight sneer. "You see that this liaison has cost you your love, your happiness, your fortune. The girl Julie is now in my pay; she has given me the letters which were intercepted. You can take them, if you please."

Lorini read through those details which have been already told: of the plot to separate him from

Maddalena, and in what manner it had been carried out. He took the letters and gave back the book.

"Have you any letters from her?" said the Baron in a low voice.

"They are here, sir," said he, handing him the bundle of letters he had taken from his desk.

There was an interval of silence.

Then Lorini rose, and said, "Baron Sackowsky, we have fought a duel, and you have killed my pride, which is far more precious to me than my life. I do not know what to say. I am a ruined, humiliated man. But some day, sir, I may win back my self-esteem; some day I may become a celebrated man. I will then come to you and ask you to forgive me the wrong which I have done your name."

"It is well, sir," said the general, also rising. "Those are foolish and not criminal who can feel shame; and those who are truly noble can afford to bend. Go, sir, you are young, you may retrieve all. Avoid vice; preserve the honour of your great house; labour to add a jewel to its crown of fame; and in your moments of misery, for misery you will surely know, console yourself with the thought that

there is one who now suffers more than it is possible for other men to understand."

Lorini bowed humbly, passed through the window and by a wooden piazza into the garden. He wandered into the Alley of Lichtenthal. He walked on and on as in a dream. As sometimes pain is so acute that the sufferer cannot shriek; as sometimes grief is so intense that the mourner cannot weep; so the shock to his mind had been so great that he could not think; his brain lay crushed and flattened beneath an indefinable sensation of shame and woe.

He was restored to consciousness by a loud, sonorous, ringing sound. He looked down the avenue towards the town; a carriage approached, drawn by four horses at a gallop, and swinging from side to side. As it passed him a white face flashed at the window. "*Save me!*" cried a well-known voice. At the same time an enormous hand protruded from the window and covered the gurgling mouth. Lorini looked back. A man and woman were seated in the rumble, and he recognised the horrible laughter of Julie.

Then a sudden trembling seized him; he felt

afraid of the dark ; he ran back to the town, and entered Jenoure's chamber, the cold sweat running down his face.

Jenoure was lying on the bed dressed, and smiling over the last chapters of "Gerfaut."

"Well," said he, "what are to be the weapons?"

Lorini poured out half a tumbler of brandy and emptied it at a draught.

"You are taking it too soon," said Jenoure, "if you require that sort of thing. First affair, I presume?"

Lorini related all that had taken place. He wished to disburden his mind by words; and also he felt a bitter pleasure in confessing his own humiliation; his mind was still so proud that it could trample upon itself.

"God! what a character!" cried Jenoure. "And they are gone, then?"

"Yes," said Lorini, shuddering. "Oh! that hand! Something terrible must be in store for that unhappy woman."

"The vengeance of such a man must be artistic, sublime!" cried Jenoure, walking up and down the room.

"Vengeance on a woman!" exclaimed Lorini.

"And why not? Here is this woman, heartless, shameless, cold as ice, hard as a stone, perjured and brazen, eaten up with vice, and who amuses herself by plotting against an innocent girl, and an inoffensive fool, as coolly as she would sit down to a game of chess. Well, her sins at length provoke their punishment; the avenger comes; and then, forsooth, she has only to weep a few tears, and to make herself look pale, and every one shall sympathise with her because she is so beautiful and so weak. Weak! Such women are stronger than most of us men. Such tears come from the head, not from the heart; they are distilled thoughts; and are composed of rage and hatred, cunning and deceit."

"But, Jenoure, the fault is not all on her side. If a man marries and then leaves his wife all to herself——"

"She is doubly guilty if she dishonours him. There is some excuse for a woman who is watched day and night, and whose husband is perhaps jealous of her without cause. But here is a man who is forced to leave his wife that he may risk his life in

the service of his country. He says to himself, 'I will not shut her up in my château in the country and make my relations sheep-dogs over her. I will not deprive her of harmless gaieties, and condemn her to a dreary solitude, as I have the right. No, I will trust her,'—and I say that only the worst women betray such a trust. Let me tell you, sir, that in our country, the wives of men who are absent in naval service or in India, or elsewhere, are the most virtuous of women. Let me tell you——"

"Oh, Jenoure, Jenoure!" cried Lorini, bursting into tears, "why did you prevent me from writing that letter? I might have been so happy with her."

Jenoure looked at him, and his face softened down. His lips quivered a little, and he took Lorini's hand.

Eugenio hid his head upon Jenoure's breast. "And now," he said, "I am a ruined man. I am trod upon by him; I am laughed at by you; I am loathed by myself."

"My poor boy," said Jenoure, in a voice so soft and sweet that Lorini looked up in his face, as if expecting to find that it was some one else,— "believe me, you are mistaken. You had not quenched your thirst for the vanities, which now I hope that you

have done with for ever. You had not seen enough of life before. If you had married Maddalena then, you would have committed some such follies as you have just done here, and that with a wife would have been more than folly, you know."

Eugenio did not answer. Jenoure lifted up his head and kissed him on both cheeks. "Eugenio," said he, "what did you say just now? That you intended to become an artist, did you not?"

Eugenio bent his head.

"Then be thankful that you have no woman to clog your mind. Women are tyrannical and vain; they desire to absorb all into themselves; they become jealous of your time, of your thoughts, of all that you do not give to them. If you wish to be great, you must abandon them altogether, or make them toys; treat them as people of fashion do their children—have them in only at dessert. Take them up as books, to recreate the mind through the senses; read them for ideas, and then fling them away. The love which women can inspire is a poor pitiful passion,—insipid, without variety, and brief; fit only, in such men as us, for the first years of our youth; it is useful then to elevate the mind,

and to train one to live outside oneself. But that age for you is *passed*. Your illusions have evaporated, have they not? They do not last long. The ancients were right in painting Cupid as a child. But take Art as your mistress, and in the peace and silence of your study you will taste an enjoyment intoxicating and sweet as an amour. Take Art as your mistress, and labour in her arms. You will have the transports of the father who creates, and of the woman who conceives; your works will be your children, and you will love them as no mother ever loved her child. You will love them as we love those to whom we devote all our energies, for whom we sacrifice our lives. Take Art as your mistress; you will discover new beauties in her every day; her kisses will never tire you, for each kiss is a new pleasure, each kiss is an idea. And this mistress will never betray you; she will remain true to you always, if you remain true to her. But you must not flirt with other passions or she will fly. You must work always. Constant labour is the law of Art as of life. Voltaire lived in his study, Canova in his studio. By this steep and stony road alone can we climb the Apennines of Fame."

"You speak from experience, Jenoure ?

"I do. I have learnt life thoroughly, I have known all pleasures, and almost all pains. I do not tell you that Fame will make you happy. It is a flower on a mountain top which withers as soon as it is grasped. I tell you that there is only one kind of happiness worth having—that is, hope ; and there is only one kind of hope worth having, and that is hope put into action—*toil*."

"Then I will toil."

Jenoure sat down ; the excitement was past ; his features re-assumed their habitual cynical expression ; and his voice, when he spoke again, had its old sarcastic tone.

"By-the-by," he said, "you have taken my sketches of you, have you not ?"

"Here they are," said Lorini, "you are welcome to use them as you please. But make copies, and let me have them. They will serve as warnings to me."

"In that case, you may keep them ; the originals are locked up safely."

"You left them then for me to——"

"Question me not. The ways of artists are inscrutable."

He rang the bell. "I must have my man to pack up my things," he said.

"Where are you going?"

"To a distant country. I have a study to make. If you wish to hear from me, write to the 'Travellers'. Your letters will be forwarded. And now the last piece of advice I shall give you is to go to-bed."

He opened a portmanteau, humming "*Il segreto per esser felice*."

"Ah, Jenoure," said Lorini, as he took his hand, "how I envy you. You seem to have gained the secret of being happy."

"You think so!" he replied, with a laugh, and turning suddenly away.

But Lorini saw his face reflected in the mirror. Was that Jenoure? A face with agonised eyes and writhing features, on every lineament of which was stamped, *Despair*.

CHAPTER III.

It was winter at Vachell Court. The dull dark sky descended almost to the earth; the fields lay with their brown entrails upturned, deserted of labourers, desolate and bare; the trees stood shivering in the wind, and dropping their yellow leaves. The earth seemed dead. No sun shone; no birds sang; even the rooks had left their homes to seek a shelter in the great beech woods.

At night the wind howled, and an owl flew round the house, hissing, hooting, and flapping its wide grey wings.

Then came an iron frost and turned the ground to stone. The birds sat stupefied on the bushes round the house, with their feathers puffed out, and slowly starved to death. The sky was clear, but cold and stern. There was misery in the

village; the men had no work; and the old people began to die.

The squire's lady with the dark eyes came to them no more. The servants, as they sat round the kitchen fire, could no longer listen to her sweet voice from the little room up-stairs. They seldom saw her now. They saw her only at the family meals, eating and drinking but enough to preserve her life; or at prayer-time, sitting pale and silent, with her eyes drooped and her thin hands resting on each other; sometimes she went out into the stable-yard to throw down crumbs for the starving birds; sometimes they saw her in the shrubbery, walking slowly, thinly clad, unmindful of the cold, looking before her with fixed and vacant eyes.

The maids spoke in whispers of their ill-treated lady; of the woman who worked them so hard, who stinted them of fire and food, and who when they gave warning refused to give them characters; of the master, about whom there was something wrong; and of the smooth-tongued butler, who spied them so closely as he read the Bible in the kitchen, and who kept pieces of ice wrapped up in blankets in his own room.

After the quarrel, and the mysterious incident by which it had been followed, and which still perplexed Maddalena, Miss Atkins had not spoken to her. She had concentrated her energies upon the subjugation of her brother's mind; she had caressed him with delicate and assiduous attentions, inspired, not by love for him, but by hatred for Maddalena. If she found them talking together, she invented a pretext for taking him away; she declared to him that she could never be friendly with his wife again; not because they had had words together, but because she had, by her violence, endangered the life of the brother whom she loved so much.

Maddalena cared little for this; she escaped the petty annoyances with which she had been teased. She was left alone with her great miseries.

She used to sit all day long in her little room; it was very cold, but she could play there as well as sing. She possessed a large library of music, among which were many instrumental pieces; she determined to make herself a pianist. Dr. Darlington had told her that with her delicate constitution she must never depend upon her voice; that, powerful as it was, she must lose it from ill-health. "I must

have other accomplishments," she said to herself, and played or sang nearly all day long. And once a day she went into the village with medicines or broths, the only things which she had ever asked her husband for. Thus occupied, she was as happy as she had ever been since her marriage.


But Miss Atkins began to suffer from headaches. She lay on the sofa during three successive days. She complained of the noise of the piano, and that Maddalena's screams, as she called them, went through her brain. Atkins told this to his wife, and requested her to discontinue her exercises for a little while.

Maddalena took refuge among the cottagers. They were glad enough to hear her sing. She learnt some of the old country songs, with their rude but plaintive airs. She sang lullabies to children in their cradles. The old people liked her to sing them the Evening Hymn.

But presently she found that they received her with constraint, and seemed relieved when she rose to go; that they never asked her to sing; that they answered her with short words, and with down-turned eyes; that the children who had formerly

come round her as soon as she entered the village, and climbed upon her lap as soon as she sat down, now ran away and hid themselves from her ; and a mother would call them and gather them round her when she approached, as a hen calls her chickens under the coop when a hawk appears in the air ; and people clustered together and whispered, and pointed at her with the finger from afar ; and the sick made excuses for not drinking the broth which she brought down from the house, and which she warmed over their fires with her own hands.

In time she discovered what this meant. Miss Atkins had been there. She had whispered in every ear that Maddalena was a Papist ; that she was a female Jesuit in disguise. The word *Jesuit* has still terrors for many persons in England even of the educated classes ; the word *Papist* is still associated by the lower order of minds with Gunpowder Plots and Smithfield Fires. There happened to be no Catholic family in that district ; the simple villagers had heard only of our religion through ignorant parsons and lying tracts. Ungrateful and suspicious as peasants always are, they gave ready credence to this calumny against their benefactress, and detected



a scheme in her kind services. Thus her voice and her charity were silenced. She could only throw crumbs to the birds.

It would be difficult to define her husband's feelings towards her. His infatuation, made up of passion and vanity, had passed ; there was little gold left when the mind was washed away. Besides, his mind was beginning to succumb beneath a malady from which he had suffered all his life ; he was completely under the domination of his sister, who began to rule him with a stern hand, and he dared not openly sympathise with one whom she hated and oppressed.

But one dim winter morning when she rose from his side and began to dress, her teeth chattering with cold ; when he saw how that form once so beautiful had changed ; when he saw her dwindled, shrivelled breast, her thin arms, the bones protruding from her neck, her hair which as she combed it came out in tufts ; her forehead furrowed by long deep lines ; her pinched features, and her eyes which seemed ever filled with the vapour of tears, he felt a pang of pity and remorse. He took hold of her passive hand. " Ah, Maddalena !" he

said ; " I fear that you would have been happier if you had married that Italian, than you are with me."

He felt her hand throb in his. " What Italian ?" she cried.

" The one who used to visit you so often when I knew you first."

Then observing her bewildered look, he said, " What a fool I am ! No doubt that was another of your father's lies. And yet no, it could not have been ; he showed me the letter ; it was in Italian, but he told me I might keep it if I chose."

She did not dare nor care to ask him more. She pondered deeply on those words. She made her mind dwell in the past ; at first all was dark ; then, as the eyes of a prisoner in a dungeon acquire a power above those of other men, her mind became gifted with a strange lucidity and penetration. The dark became clear ; the hidden became visible ; the forgotten returned to life. Words and looks, seen but unobserved, arrayed themselves before her. She saw the shadow of a plot upon the wall.

When the mind interred in deep solitude centres itself upon one thought and pursues it without ceasing, there are no obstacles which it cannot over-

come. It was thus, as Newton himself said, his gigantic discoveries were made; it was thus that Maddalena worked out a problem which held the same place in her mind as the gravitation theory in that of the great astronomer. She recollected that her father had cursed Eugenio the first night after he had seen him; he had begun by hating him. She also recollected that on the night he had returned covered with dirt and worn with fatigue, he had muttered something about revenge. Her mind had been filled with Eugenio then; she had reflected little of the cause of her father's strangeness at the time. She had supposed that he had been so troubled because he had lost at the Tombola, in spite of his dream, and had not returned home because he was ashamed to confess it to her. She had now little doubt that Eugenio had reproached him as bitterly and imprudently as he had afterwards done when she was present. She recalled to mind a host of little things besides which proved that her father hated him intensely.

She had heard by accident that Julie, after leaving her service had entered that of the Baroness Sackowsky. This gave her the clue. It was her

father who had procured the dismissal of her maid ; she had frequently observed that there appeared to be some secret understanding between him and Julie ; but for a long time she could get no farther than this. It happened, however, that Miss Atkins had put away, in a cupboard in her brother's bedroom, a number of old tattered books, which seemed too worthless to send up to London to sell. Maddalena rummaging among these had found an old-fashioned romance in a blue paper binding, such as used to fill the circulating libraries years ago. It was a story of two lovers whom a jealous woman had separated by means of forged and intercepted letters. She saw it all now ; she had put no letter for Eugenio in the post herself ; and her own letters came always through her father's hands. She remembered how unwilling her father had been that she should keep the letter from Eugenio to the Baroness Sackowsky ; how earnestly he had begged her to destroy it. She opened a little desk, and took out some relics of her love. These were a lock of his hair which she had cut off when he was taking a siesta, with his head upon her lap ; a flower which he had plucked for her off a hedge ;

come. It was thus, as Newton himself said, his gigantic discoveries were made ; it was thus that Maddalena worked out a problem which held the same place in her mind as the gravitation theory in that of the great astronomer. She recollected that her father had cursed Eugenio the first night after he had seen him ; he had began by hating him. She also recollected that on the night he had returned covered with dirt and worn with fatigue, he had muttered something about revenge. Her mind had been filled with Eugenio then ; she had reflected little of the cause of her father's strangeness at the time. She had supposed that he had been so troubled because he had lost at the Tombola, in spite of his dream, and had not returned home because he was ashamed to confess it to her. She had now little doubt that Eugenio had reproached him as bitterly and imprudently as he had afterwards done when she was present. She recalled to mind a host of little things besides which proved that her father hated him intensely.

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returned to the Baroness Sackowsky? He had believed her equally faithless, equally perjured, and led away, not by the temptations of pleasure, but by a sordid love of gold. "Oh, Eugenio! Eugenio!" she cried; "what must you think of me now!"

One morning ere she woke, she dreamt that she was with him again. They were seated upon the marble bench. It was the hour of dusk. She saw the cypresses, which cast deep shadows upon the earth; she heard the loved chimes of the city from below, she felt the warm Italian air upon her cheeks. She dreamt that she saw *him*; that he was gazing on her tenderly, with all the old love in his look, that she flung her arms round him, and cried, "Dearest, dearest, thou art mine now, and we must part no more." Then she awoke, and heard these last words dying on her tongue. She found her head upon her husband's breast, her arms round him, and his cold grey eyes looking down in astonishment upon her face. She murmured, "I was dreaming!" and slowly wound herself away. She turned hot and cold. Had she spoken his name in her sleep? This must not happen again. The next night, under the plea of indisposition, she slept in her little room,

which she left no more. He did not remonstrate, and from that time they ceased to be husband and wife, except in name.

She now thought of Eugenio all day long. Even when she slept her heart remained awake ; she dreamt continually of him. She wandered out in the woods that she might sing the airs which he had taught her. He had once written his name on the fly-leaf of her missal ; she tore this out and wore it always in her bosom ; she looked forward eagerly to the hour of rest, quivering with impatience through the long and weary evening prayers ; then she would undress herself quickly, blow out the light, and glide in between the cold white sheets with shivering limbs and a palpitating heart. And as soon as the bed grew warm, her brain opened, and the memories of the past came round her ; and wild, wicked, voluptuous thoughts, encouraged by the silence and solitude of the night, stole forth, and poured whispers in her ears.

She determined to leave her husband and return upon the stage. When she had earned some money, she would find Eugenio ; she would become his slave, his mistress, whatever he pleased ; she would

never leave him again. Her father should not come near them ; she would give up all for him—her honour as a wife, her duty as a daughter, her modesty as a woman.

Then she would start back in horror from these wicked thoughts ; and return to them, muttering with compressed lips, "It is not my fault ; I have been deceived ; I have been bought and sold ; I have been persecuted ; I am driven to desperation ; on their heads shall be my sins."

She did not know that a divorce can be obtained so much more easily in England than in Italy. She saw little hope of ever being released from the shackles which bound her to her husband. But wherever there is mystery there is hope. She often reflected upon the scene which had taken place after her quarrel with Jane Atkins. And again it happened, at least so she thought. She was in the dining-room by herself, when she heard a violent ringing of bells ; the shrill voice of Jane Atkins called for ice ; there was a running of feet in the hall ; she heard a heavy body fall upon the echoing stone floor ; she ran to the door, but at the same moment it was bolted from outside ; she heard the

sound of whisperings, and of feet which trod slowly and heavily as if something was being carried away. The door was unbolted, and she went up to her room.

She laid down upon the bed that she might think. She heard subdued voices and cautious footsteps in the next room, and the plashing of water, and sometimes she caught words from Miss Atkins, such as, "*Let me do it!*" and "*It is over now!*"

She remembered how her husband had changed since she had seen him first; how ill he looked; how carefully his sister watched him. It was plain that he suffered from some disease, which attacked him suddenly and fiercely, and which was gradually wasting his life away. Then there settled on her mind a horrible thought, vulture-like, with bright yellow eyes, and a naked neck, and a hard, hooked beak, emitting a carrion stench, and having its feathers stained with blood. She sprang up in bed, her body crouched, her neck protruding, and looked round her with glittering eyes. *She might soon be free!*

Miss Atkins had remarked that for a long time

past Maddalena had changed. Her face had lost its eternal expression of lassitude and unconcern. It was at times brighter, at times darker, than it had ever been before. She was certain that there must be some reason for this, and spied her industriously, but without avail.

She was now seated by her brother's side. He was asleep. On a table by the bed was a basin of water, a lump of half-melted ice, and a handkerchief covered with blood and foam. Jane Atkins having assured herself that he was sleeping, took off her boots, and went on tip-toe to the door which led into Maddalena's room. Putting aside a coat which hung upon a peg, she pulled out of the door a little wooden plug, and applied her eye to the aperture. She saw Maddalena kneeling before the picture of the Madonna of the Seven Dolors. Her eyes were streaming with tears, and she was saying something in a troubled voice. But it was in Italian, and she could not understand. But presently she saw Maddalena take a piece of paper from her bosom and tear it into pieces; then open a desk, take out two other letters, and also tear them up; something which seemed to be a faded flower she pinched

between her fingers, it crumbled into dust, which she shook from her hands upon the floor. She was speaking all the while, and often said the word "*Eugenio !*"

Presently she became more composed ; glancing at the sun which was about to set, she took from the mantelpiece a little saucer filled with oil, on the surface of which floated a cotton wick. She lighted the wick, and chanted in a low voice some Latin words. When the tiny light died out, she replaced the saucer on the mantelpiece, climbed on a chair, kissed the picture of the Madonna on the lips, and putting on her bonnet and cloak left the room.

It was now spring. There had been several sunny days, and the evening was quite warm. The rooks cawing loudly had begun to build their nests ; the finches flew in pairs ; the horse-chestnuts had blossomed ; one lilac tree was already in flower, and Maddalena found in the shrubbery a tuft of prim-roses expanding their golden flowers amid velvety green leaves.

Her face was calm and bright. She had been to vespers : she had confessed her sins ; and she was

about to begin another life. She would be kind and attentive to her husband, and would nurse him when he was ill. She would think no more of Eugenio ; these memories which so long had been her companions were evil spirits ; she would drive them all away. She would continue to suffer, but she would not sin ; and she hoped that her sorrows in this life would be the seeds of happiness in the life to come.

But the dark shades of evening came round her ; a cold wind arose from the east ; she wrapped her shawl closely round her, and hurried towards the house ; some drops of rain began to fall, and the trees groaning shook their branches as she passed beneath.

On arriving at the house, she felt in her pocket for her key. It was not there ; she must have left it in the door. She had a presentiment, and ran quickly up the stairs. Her fears were confirmed. The crucifix had been broken ; the picture of the Madonna lay in shreds upon the floor. Even her cushion, her little saucer, and her books of devotion had been destroyed. She sat for several minutes completely stupefied on the edge of the bed. She

picked up the fragments of her poor idols, one by one, and placed them on the table, looking at them with vacant eyes. Then she gave a stifled cry: her face flushed: she flung open the casement and cried:—

“It is then a Devil who rules up there and not a God. You refuse my repentance! You wish to drive me to despair! So be it: so be it. I have had enough of this.”

She dipped her face in water, arranged her dress, and walked slowly down the stairs. When her pale, stern face appeared at the door, Atkins shuddered, and his sister for a moment felt afraid.

She advanced to the table, and placed upon it some pieces of the picture, the crucifix, and the books. Then she turned her eyes to Jane Atkins, and said, pointing to them,

“It was you.”

“Yes, it was I.”

Maddalena turned to her husband, and said:

“From this moment, sir, I cease to be your wife. To-morrow I shall leave you for ever. You have done me no harm yourself; but you have not resisted the cruelty of this woman against me as you

should have done. I leave you with her : she must torture some one ; and you will be punished enough. May God help you. But I can no longer bear it. She has my life between her hands, and is squeezing the blood out of it drop by drop."

He was about to speak, when his sister interrupted him. "It's no use talking, Richard. If you want her to stop, you can make her stop. If she runs away, you can bring her back. The law puts her in your power."

"Be quiet, Jane," said Atkins. "You have done enough for one day, and I must teach you that you are not to remain always mistress in this house. That right belongs to my wife. I see plainly enough that you cannot both remain here ; and to-morrow you will have to go. Ay, and by the first train," he said, in a louder voice, and answering her look ; "so you had better pack up your things at once."

"No, no, Mr. Atkins," said Maddalena, softening. "Your sister will attend to you—I think you are sometimes ill, are you not ?—better than I can do. She has more experience. I cannot live with her any longer, but I am sure I forgive her from my heart."

Her husband took her hand in his. "Maddalena," he said, "do not leave me. I shall not be ill many more times now, and you will not mind nursing me a little, will you, dear? I do not think that I have long to live. Maddalena, I have behaved badly to you; you have been very miserable here: and so have I. But we will not stop here: you shall take me to Italy, perhaps the sun will do me good; and you shall have your father with you if you like, and let him gamble! I have money enough, God knows, and it will be no use to me when I am gone."

Maddalena drew the poor creature towards her, and kissed him for the first time. "Yes, yes," she said, "I will stop with you; but you must not talk like that."

"Ah, Maddalena," he whispered, "I am going, going, very fast. But I want before I die to wipe away some of the wrongs which I have done to you. I have often wondered what was that love which people wrote about in books. I think that I can understand it a little now. I don't know how it is, but I've become quite changed of late. I don't care for money now. I like to look at the sky, and wonder what goes on up there. The other day I hid myself

in the shrubbery to hear you sing, and your voice made me cry like a child. Something seems opened in me now. Maddalena dear, you will stop with me, will you not ?”

“Yes, Richard,” she said, “I will stop with you, and your sister may stop too.”

“No, no,” he said, “let her go ; we will give her plenty of money : that is what she likes better than me.”

Then he gave a smile.

“You never called me Richard before ; but we mean to be quite different to each other now. You shall sing to me, and read to me out of nice books ; and when my time comes you shall smile on me, and press my hand and sing to me the Evening Hymn. Ah ! I remember your singing it to poor Sally Brewer when she was so ill,—

‘Teach me to live that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed ;
Teach me to die that so I may
Rise joyful on the judgment day.’

Yes, yes, the words seemed to strike me then,—the words seemed to strike me then ;” and he began to twirl his fingers and mutter to himself, and to

look about him in all directions with his glassy eyes.

His sister, chafing with rage, at length exclaimed :
“ Well, Richard, you may do as you please, of course ; I have no desire to stop in the house along with a heathen and a fool. But I have done my duty in breaking her graven images, and I shall do it in something else before I go.”

She turned round to Maddalena, and transfixing her with a look, she said :

“ I was listening at the door this afternoon, when you were talking to your dear picture. I heard every word you said. Here, Richard, as you seem so anxious to please your wife, I tell you what you can do. Let her send for a gentleman called Eugenio.”

Miss Atkins shot in the dark, but her arrow went through a heart. Maddalena fainted away.

When she came to her senses, she was lying dressed upon her bed, with two of her maids seated by. She sent them away, that she might have her face at liberty, and be able to think without restraint.

When Maddalena had knelt before the Madonna, she had confessed herself. She had called herself a murderess, because for a moment she had looked forward with joy to her husband's death ; an adulteress, because she had allowed the memory of Eugenio to deflower and defile her mind : she had confessed herself as she could not have confessed to a priest ; she had confessed not only her thoughts, but her sensations. Forgetting that though she had spoken aloud, she had spoken in Italian, she believed that Jane Atkins had really heard all, and by this time doubtless had repeated every word to her brother. Maddalena was extremely sensitive and proud ; she felt that she could not dare to look at them again. Most women probably would have felt the same.

She went to the window, opened the casement, fastened the hasp, and leaning her elbows on the sill, her head upon her hands, gazed out upon the night. The wind struck her, and the sleet dashed sharply in her face. Then she lifted up her voice and cried :

“Eternal Mother of God, I desert my duty ; I turn my back upon this poor dying man. But

tell Him what I suffer, and pray Him to forgive me."

She looked down into the park. There stood the giant trees, brandishing their huge limbs in the wind, and casting flickering shadows upon the earth. She looked out beyond into the fields. A white hand-post stood like a ghost with one arm outstretched. It pointed towards a yellow light which, scarcely visible in the distance, appeared and disappeared like a star. It was the Cullingford Railway Station four miles away.

And as she stood there the owl flew by, flapping his great grey wings. "Oh, there is death upon this house!" she cried.

A dog howled.

"Oh, Eugenio, Eugenio, thou art the curse of my life!" She stretched out her arms in the air. A dead leaf fell in her hand.

"Hark!" what is that dull murmur which grows louder and louder till it is almost a roar, and which rolls like thunder past the light.

It is the night-mail.

"That light is a beacon," she cried; "that sound is a voice. They tell me to escape from here."


Without undressing, she laid herself down upon the bed, to wait till it was dawn. But she began to doze, and presently fell into a kind of waking sleep; she still saw the candle, but it seemed to her to be the station-light; she heard the moaning of the wind, and half thought, half dreamt that it was the murmur of the train.

Her sleep became deeper, and her visions became more wild. Yet neither eyes nor ears were closed. When the house swayed in the wind, she dreamt that she was in the train, which rocked from side to side; when the owl fluttered against the window, attracted by the light, she saw a white fleshless face which peered in and gibbered at her. Then she dreamt that the engine whistled, but its whistle was like a human shriek. She awoke with a start, and looked round her. The candle had burnt down into the socket; a little flame leapt up, and it went out. She became broad awake, and sat up in the bed, but all was silent now. She reflected on her dream. Was it a real shriek which she had heard? It had seemed so real, and yet so unlike anything which she had ever heard before. It still rang in her ears. Then

she laughed at herself. How could it have been anything but a dream?

She went to the window and looked out. She thought that the trees seemed clearer than before. Presently she saw the brown clouds turn grey; she could see the distant fields, and a mist hanging over them like smoke. She washed herself, changed her dress, and put on a pair of thick boots. She listened once more at her husband's door; there was not a sound. She knelt down at the bed, wept a short prayer, then opened her door softly, crept down the stairs, stole across the wide stone floor of the hall, lifted with difficulty the iron bar, unloosed the chain, took down the bells, unshot the bolts, and wrapping a handkerchief round her hand turned the huge key. She opened the door, which creaked loudly, and closed it after her, that her flight might not be discovered as soon as the servants rose. She breathed more freely as soon as she was outside the house. The cold air refreshed her like a bath.

She ran like a doe down the broad gravel drive, avoided the lodge by climbing over the iron rails, crossing the park, and leaping the sunken fence which separated it from the road.



She walked as quickly as she could along the road between the fields. When she passed the hand-post she smiled, and shuddered as she remembered her fears and fancies of the night before, which the daylight had quite dispelled. After walking a quarter of a mile the road dipped down between two high chalk banks. She looked back at the house, trembling ; but the shutters were still before all the windows, and in a few more steps it was hidden from her sight. After another quarter of a mile she emerged again into the open fields. Straight before her was the station with its signal-posts rising in the air. As she followed the road she found that it bent away to the right ; she tried to walk across the ploughed fields, but every moment she sank up to her ankles in the clay. She returned to the road and went on for about two miles. Then she saw that it was leading her towards a line of willow trees, with here and there a cottage peeping out, and soon she caught sight of a blue river. She now recollected that the Thames ran between her and the station, and that when she had come with her husband in the fly, they had made a wide detour, and passed through the town of Cullingford, the spires of which she saw

rising among elms far away to the right. "I am lost!" she cried to herself. "They will overtake me long before I can get there."

She met a man dressed in a smock-frock, and with his corduroy trousers tied with whip-cord to raise them from his boots. It was a farm labourer going to his work.

"My good man," she said, "I want to go to the railway-station; will you tell me the shortest way?"

The man stared at her, and drawled out, "Bee a-going up by the first train, baint 'ee?"

"Yes, yes," she said impatiently, "by the first train; which is the way?"

"He must walk danged quick to catch it then," said the rustic, with a knowing air. "It'll soon be due, and they don't take long a comin', trains do-ant."

"Then please tell me which is the quickest way, for I want to lose no time."

"No, that 'ee do-ant, I'll be bound for't. Well, I don't think 'ee can go no shorter road than the ferry. 'Ee can cut across the fields, and get 'ver the brige, 'ee know, only it baint allowed, and p'rhaps they'll pull 'ee up for it. They be rare uns for

that them railway chaps. My brother Jem's allers for doin' everything in such a mortal hurry, ye know—can't take things easy, loike ; so, one day he was comin' whoam from Reading Fair, and when he gets to Cullingford ste-ation, out he jumps afore the train had done movin', and broke his leg, and were a matter of six weeks in the horsepital, and then they pulls he up and makes him pay two pounds for't—that they did—as if he'd done anybody any hurt except hisself."

"But please tell me where the ferry is," said Maddalena.

"What, doant 'ee know where the ferry be ! Coom, coom, 'ee be a jokin'."

"I am not, indeed. Please tell me where it is."

"Get along with 'ee—wanting to make fun o' a poor old man. Whoy, everybody knows the ferry here for moiles round."

"But I am a stranger here, and I do not know my way—I do not indeed."

"Well, this road'll take 'ee straight to't ; but there, you knows that as well as I do, I'll be bound for't."

"Thank you, thank you," said she, and hurried on.

When she arrived at the ferry the man and boat were on the other side. The people at the cottage rang a bell, and the ferryman was pointed out to her fishing under a stunted willow. Having waited a few moments to see if a nibble would become a bite, he leisurely got up, inspected his bait, shook his head, twisted the line round his rod and laid it on the grass with as much care as if it had been alive. Then he got into the boat, unchained it slowly, and allowed the current to carry it across, sometimes touching the water with his oars. Quivering with impatience she sprang into the boat, and begged him to row quickly as she wished to catch the early train. He assured her that she had plenty of time. As soon as the boat touched the other side she jumped out and hastened off as quickly as she could. Presently she heard him running after her. She turned round. "'Beg pardon, marm," said he, touching his cap; "it's Mrs. Atkins of Vachell, ain't it?" She replied that it was; and the man apparently perfectly contented went back to his nibbling perch. What could this mean? thought she.

In ten minutes, by running more than half the way, she arrived at the Cullingford Road Station. The porter touched his cap to her with a dubious air.

"When does the early train come in?" she asked.

"Due in a quarter of an hour, ma'am—up train, I suppose you mean?"

"Yes," she said, vaguely, "the up-train."

"Other side of the platform, please ma'am. Shall I get your ticket for you?"

"Oh, my ticket," she replied; "yes, if you please—at least, thank you, no—I will get it myself." And she went into the ticket-office.

The station-master looked very much surprised when he saw Mrs. Atkins of Vachell come in, her dress and boots covered with mud, and without a maid.

"Does this train go to London, please, sir?" she asked.

The man immediately became the mere official. "Ticket for Paddington—first-class, I suppose, ma'am—nine shillings and fourpence, if *you* please."

Maddalena turned red, and then very pale. She now understood why the ferryman had asked her

name. She had not thought of bringing any money with her, nor indeed had she any in her possession. What was she to do? The want of those few shillings were fatal to her. Then taking off her brooch, she offered it to the station-master, and said, "I am sorry, sir, but I have forgotten my purse, and I must go by this train—I must indeed. Will you take this till I can send you the money?"

"Lor, ma'am," said the man, getting red in his turn, "there's no call for that; we know you well enough, I should think. You can settle that when you come down. Was it a single ticket you wanted, or a return?"

"This will do," said Maddalena, taking the one which he had stamped, "and I am very much obliged to you, sir."

"Don't mention it, ma'am; and pray sit down by the fire; you must be a-cold."

But Maddalena could not sit down. She wandered up and down the platform, sometimes stopping before the office-door to glance at the clock; sometimes she went to the station gate and looked down the Cullingford Road. A cart in the distance made her thoroughly wretched for five minutes. She

expected every moment that some one would be sent after her from Vachell.

That long thin hand of time, how slowly it turned. The clock struck at last, but no train came.

She had now a fresh cause of anxiety, and called the porter to her. "Was there an accident on the rail, did he think? Why did not the train come?"

The porter reassured her. The lines were slippery after the rain; that most in general made the train a matter late. How long, he could not say—not for certain. But if there'd been an accident it would have been telegraphed to them, no doubt.

Maddalena looked up at the long thin wires which, stretched from post to post, were humming in the wind. The good-natured porter guessing that she had some reason for being so restless and impatient, took her up a little eminence at the end of the platform close by the red brick arch. Thence they could look a long way along the glittering metal lines which seemed to meet in a point about five miles off. The porter discoursed topographically upon this "bit of road." Maddalena heard little of what he said till the words "*Here she comes*" made her start up from

her thoughts. She saw a white speck which became a cloud, and out of this cloud came a black stern thing, which grew larger and larger without appearing to move, and which, to her disturbed fancy, resembled something monstrous, and alive. When it whistled she thought of the shriek; and as it passed she trembled more than the platform on which she stood.

The station-master came out and opened the door of the ladies' carriage himself. She sprang in hastily. The train remained three minutes; it seemed an age to her. A conversation which the porter held with the guard about a parcel, she thought was protracted on purpose to annoy her. She scowled at the man when he put in his head at the window, to see if she was comfortable, and touched his cap with a smile, which seemed to her a sardonic grin. When the train was fairly off she had a moment of intense relief, but her eyes fell on the telegraph wires, and her torments recommenced. She remembered what the porter had said about telegraphing. The train would not arrive in London for two hours yet. Before that time her husband would surely trace her to the station, and the porter would advise him to intercept

her by a message. She did not feel really safe till she had ensconced herself in the corner of a cab, and told the man to drive to Dr. Darlington's address. But her troubles were not yet over. Darlington was not at home; the servant thought that she would find him at the hospital.

The cab stopped before an immense building of sombre aspect, like a prison or a workhouse. She passed through swinging doors into a large stone hall, in which a crowd of sickly wretches were collected. A man in a dingy livery came up to her, and said—

“Got a letter?”

“No,” stammered Maddalena, “but I want to—”

“All right,” said the man, “house-surgeon will attend to you. Now then,” said he, turning to another, “what do *you* want?”

Maddalena, in a splashed and shabby dress, had been mistaken by the porter for an out-patient. Despairing of obtaining any information from this man, she went on with the crowd which struggled up a flight of broad stone steps. At the top of these stood a knot of young men who were talking and laughing, and staring very hard at the

females who passed. Maddalena had the courage to ask one of them where she could find the house-surgeon.

"Now then, Jenkins," said one of them, "why don't you attend to the young woman?"

"Where can you find the house-surgeon, ma'am?" said the gentleman addressed, "well, if you were to go into that little room there opposite, you would find the house-surgeon eating hot buttered toast, and kissing a Sister of Charity; but as he might not like that, you had better go into the room to the left, and wait with the rest of them till your turn comes."

Maddalena went into the patients' waiting-room. Presently a bell rang, and a woman passed through an inner door into a room beyond. After a few minutes the bell rang again. Maddalena looked round her. There were thirty people there at least; if she stayed there till the last she would probably be detained two hours. So she slipped in at the half-open door, just before a ragged old woman, who was tottering towards it, and who exclaimed, in a tone of bitter irony, "Well, you have a nerve."

"Maddalena found herself confronting a young gentleman, who sat before a table with a pile of

recipe papers on one hand, an open case of instruments on the other, and a hand-bell before him. There were some bottles on the mantelpiece, some printed rules in frames upon the walls, and at the other side of the room a bedstead, half-hidden by a screen.

“ Well,” he said, in a sharp quick voice. “ What is it?”

“ If you please, sir, I want to see Dr. Darlington.”

The house-surgeon rang the bell. “ *Next patient!* This is not Dr. Darlington’s day—Mondays and Thursdays, at half-past one. Well, mother, how are you to-day?”

“ But pray tell me, sir, where I can find him. I wish to see him particularly. I have been to his house, and the servant said that he would be here.”

The house-surgeon looked at her more attentively, saw that she was a lady, and said to another man in dingy livery, “ Here, Jones, private patient for Dr. Darlington ; see if he’s in the house.”

The man took her to the porter, who informed her that the Doctor had just gone. “ If the case is

hurgent," said he, "I can give you his private address."

"I have just come from his house," she said.

"Well, but he's most likely gone home," said the porter; "it aint often he comes up here at this hour. Here comes Dr. Rudderforth, perhaps he will know."

Maddalena looked up, and saw a short, fresh-coloured man, with spectacles and grey hair, coming down the passage at a trot. As he passed by the two young men they took their hats off, and when he had passed looked at each other and laughed. The spectacles caught sight of the porter's finger pointing towards him, and hustled up to Maddalena.

"Anything I can do for you, ma'am?"

"I wish to find Dr. Darlington."

"All right, come with me; just going to meet him in consultation. Jump into the carriage. That your cab? John, pay the lady's cab. Give him half of what he asks; and if he wants my card, let him have another sixpence."

In two minutes Maddalena found herself rolling along at a rapid pace. Dr. Rudderforth plunged his

hand into the pockets of the carriage, which were stuffed with pamphlets, letters, and printer's proofs, and began correcting some of the latter with a lead pencil. In a little while the carriage stopped before a house in Sussex Square.

"I'll send him down to you," said the doctor, springing out.

"Good God, Maddalena," said Darlington, appearing at the carriage window, "what is the meaning of this?"

Maddalena burst into tears.

"Do not cry," he said. "I will be with you in five minutes; the consultation will not last long."

He came back in five minutes' time, put her into his carriage, and said "*Home*. Now, my dear girl," he said, tenderly taking her hand, "tell me all about it."

She told him all except the last scenes.

He shook his head and muttered,—“Women are like children; whenever they are unhappy they run away from home.”

He looked at his watch. "Now, my dear," he said, "you have two hours to eat a good breakfast, and to rest. Then you must go back."

"Go back!" she cried. "It is impossible!"

He remonstrated with her, but in vain, and was compelled to try his last resource.

"Maddalena," he said, "have I ever done you an injury?"

"Oh, my friend," she exclaimed, "you have covered me with kindnesses!"

"Well," he said, "you are doing me now the worst injury you possibly can."

"Oh, do not say that."

"And perhaps you will ruin me for life. Do you not see how fatally you will compromise me if you will not consent to go back. Your sister-in-law, you say, has invented a scandal against us, as it is. Now when it comes to be known that you ran away from your husband and came to me, what will the world say? It will not believe that we are merely friends, for the world does not believe in exceptions. The affair will get into the newspapers, and my reputation will be gone for ever. The world condemns as a crime in priests and in doctors that which it regards as a folly in other men, and the world is just. The doctor who abuses the confidence of a family is the worst of all traitors. Maddalena, do not expose me to such an accusation."

"Say no more," she said, sadly ; "I will go back."

"I will go with you," he said, "and you will make up some story to account for this escapade. But you must not live with these people any more. They will kill you, my poor child."

Maddalena did not reply ; and during the long journey home did not utter a word.

On arriving at Cullingford Road, she requested Darlington to repay the station-master. Darlington noticed that the man seemed astonished at Maddalena's return, and eyed her in a curious manner. She observed nothing. Her eyes were drooped ; her sufferings had begun. To some it may seem a trifle, but this proud girl in consenting to return performed the noblest action of her life. Some ladies who had come down by the same train, and whom a carriage had come to meet, were looking at Maddalena, and whispering together. They were the daughter of a neighbouring squire who had taken them up to town the previous season.

"That is Restoni," said one of them.

"Heavens, what a fright !" said another. "And she was not at all bad-looking on the stage."

“Yes; but that was all make-up. The creature is as plain as she can be.”

They took small pains to lower their voices, and Maddalena heard every one of these cruel words. They distressed her little at the time, but she had occasion afterwards to recall them to her mind.

“Why, what a curious thing!” exclaimed Darlington, as the fly passed through the lodge-gate. “All the blinds are down.”

Maddalena did not answer him; she had not heard what he said.

As they drove up to the front door, Miss Atkins came out of the house.

“What!” she cried, with a fearful look at Maddalena, “you have dared to return?”

Maddalena did not answer, but stood before her humbly, with her eyes lowered, and her hands folded together.

“Dared to return, madam!” said Darlington, haughtily. “I am at a loss to understand what you mean.”

“Possibly,” she retorted, with a sneer; “but you will soon.”

The servants came crowding on each other to the

door, peeping over each other's shoulders, and whispering stealthily together.

"Here they are, ma'am," said the butler, pointing to the gate. "It's them right enough this time."

Darlington looked up and saw a gig drawn by a powerful horse coming at a great speed down the drive. It contained two men. One of them was an ordinary-looking person, with red hair and a hideous freckled face. The other was a short compact little man, with keen brown eyes, an intelligent face, and a high massive forehead. As he stepped down from the gig, he took off his hat to Darlington.

"What, Simcox!" exclaimed the doctor.

"Yes, sir, got a job here, seemly."

Darlington attempted to draw Miss Atkins aside. "What is it, madam?" he asked. "Speak low, pray."

"What is it?" she replied in a loud voice. "This morning my poor brother was found dead, murdered in his room."

Darlington had for a moment one of those senseless suspicions which sometimes seize the most

reasonable and unsuspecting of men: he recoiled from Maddalena.

But she did not observe it. "Oh, God!" she cried; "mio padre! la vendetta!" and she sank upon her knees.

"It is too late to pray for mercy now," said Miss Atkins.

"Hush!" said Darlington, also in Italian; "not a word to any one, as you value your father's life."

CHAPTER IV.

LORINI took a cottage at Lichtenthal. His faithful Antonio refused to leave him, or to let him engage another servant.

After some trouble he found the manuscript of the libretto which he had bought from Vivaldi. It was entitled *The Daughter of the Donati*. The subject, which is celebrated in Florentine history, and to which Dante has alluded in his great poem, shall be briefly described.

The date is A.D. 1215. Messer Mazzingo de Mazzinghi is giving a *corta bandita* or revel, at his villa near Campi. His guests are Florentines of rank, and are being amused by minstrels, dancers and improvisatori. In the course of the banquet the family jester offends one of the nobles. There is a quarrel, swords are drawn, and Buondelmonte di Buondemonti wounds Oddo di Fifi. A kind

of court of honour is held, and it is arranged that Buondelmonte shall marry Oddo's niece.

In the second act Aldruda dei Donati has sent privately for Buondelmonte. She reproaches him for cowardice in consenting to marry a woman whom he does not love. She draws a curtain and shows him her daughter asleep on a couch. While he gazes, enraptured, at her beauty, her lips open ; she breathes his name ; and still sleeping, sings a confession of her love for him. She wakes, and in a charming scene he makes her his betrothed.

In the third act the Buondemonti and the Fifanti, with their retainers and a crowd of spectators, are assembled in the no longer existing church of Santa Maria Sopra Porta. In those days the marriage ceremony was simple enough ; the bridegroom placed a ring on the finger of his bride. To the sound of religious music Buondelmonte enters the church. He haughtily passes the Fifanti and places his ring on the finger of Aldruda's daughter. The priests intervene to prevent bloodshed beneath the holy roof ; but a chorus of rage and revenge mingles with the nuptial hymn.

In the fourth act, as the chronicles relate, Buon-

delmonte, mounted on a milk-white palfrey, and dressed in a white mantle, with the bridal wreath on his head, is riding through the streets of Florence. As he passes by the castle of the lady whom he has outraged, her relatives rush out, drag him off his horse, and put him to death. A woman's face appears at a window above, and they show her their blood-stained swords.

His corpse is placed on a bier, with his head resting on the lap of his widowed bride. While she chants a dirge, and kisses his pale cheeks, fearful cries, the clash of arms, and the flaming sky announce that the wars of the Guelphs and Ghibellines have begun.

In writing this libretto, Vivaldi had studied Metastasio and Scribe ; the one for his style, the other for plot and situation. He had combined the harmonious cadence of Italian poetry with the logical symmetry of the great French drama. Lorini learnt the book by heart, and made it the constant companion of his brain.

Henri Beyle has said, "Il faut avoir senti le feu dévorant des passions pour exceller dans les beaux

arts." Lorini, when he took his pen into his hand, was astonished by his own power. He did not recognise himself. His imagination, which had once crawled, which had laid so long in a chrysalis state, now came forth a new creature, decked with radiant colours, and endowed with wings.

Besides this, he had since leaving Florence made a vast stride in the knowledge of his art. The old connoisseur, whom he had met at the Craven, had rightly prophesied, "Don Giovanni had been for him a revelation." Having learnt the grandeur of German harmony, he burned to possess its secrets. He bought the scores of Sebastian Bach, Glück, Handel, Haydn, Mendelssohn, Mozart, and studied them day and night. He read their lives, and found that most of them had been men of deep and extensive reading. He took up Goethe and Schiller. These rewarded him with ideas, and led him on to Shakespeare, Milton, and Byron; to Rousseau, Chateaubriand, and George Sand; and lastly to the literature of his own country, of which he knew so little, to Dante, Petrarch, Alfieri. This industry brought him in speedy and abundant fruit. The formative faculty is not able to raise up a master-

piece of itself; the artist must dig up clay that his conception may have a form. The brain to produce much should devour much; to create in one art it should feed upon all others.

By studying carefully the two great schools of music, Lorini discovered the defects of each. The German music has too many notes, as the German literature has too many words. It is deep, but troubled; a sun obscured by its own fog. It is also deficient in melody; appeals more to the brain than to the feelings; is in fact rather a science than an art.

The Italian music is vapid and shallow; the instrumentation weak, the chorus only made use of to permit the principal singer to repose. At the theatres in Italy, the audience meet to converse, and only hush into silence when their favourite airs are sung.

Lorini conceived the daring project of combining within one opera the merits of the two schools. He would be a German when he wrote for the orchestra: an Italian when he wrote for the voice. He would import harmony into Florence; he would create a musical revolution; he would convert his countrymen as he himself had been.

Intoxicated with this idea, he laboured hard, receiving fresh incentives as from time to time he opened up new veins of thought. He lived frugally, walked several hours during every day, and enjoyed excellent health.

At first he had thought a great deal of Maddalena. Her letters had touched him to the heart; he had read them over many times, and it had pained him when he thought how much she must have suffered. But mingled with this feeling was one of bitterness and contempt against her for having married the man whom she had so often declared to him that she abhorred. What could have been her reason? What could have made her abandon the career in which she was making her fortune and her fame? Perhaps she had been actuated by a sordid motive in making herself a singer; perhaps, like so many other women who embrace the arts, she had done so to gain notoriety and make a marriage of ambition. Or, perhaps, she had married this man in order to annoy him. It is commonly supposed that women do this kind of thing. It is one of the superstitions of society. Lorini's vanity made him accept this solution of the enigma as the

most reasonable. "Poor girl!" thought he, "and could you suppose that it would give me any pain except from seeing that you could sink so low?"

But soon consumed by his work, by the tyranny of his ideas, he no longer turned his eyes upon the past. As Jenoure had once predicted, he forgot that there were women in the world. Art had become his mistress, and he enjoyed with her the raptures of a honeymoon: in which each embrace is a discovery, and when not a cloud is in the sky.

One day that he was in Baden, where he had gone to get books at Marx's library, he heard his name pronounced. He looked round, and with some difficulty recognised Restoni. The old man was horribly changed. His cheeks were of a dull white, corpse-like colour, flabby and puffed out; his teeth were decayed; his eyes bloodshot. He was in rags, and compelled to support himself as he walked with a stick.

Lorini took pity on the poor wretch, and ordering a carriage, drove him home. Restoni recounted by the way how his daughter's husband had given him a hundred pounds to take him back to Italy, and

declared that he would not let him have another farthing; how he had come to Baden, staked this money at roulette, and lost. He had received his fare to England from the bank, and had entrusted it to a friend to stake for him. That had gone too. He had written several letters to his daughter, telling her that he was imprisoned in Baden, and that he had not a farthing in the world. He had received no answer from her. He had subsisted during the last month he knew not how. He slept on a bench. He went into the woods to find berries to eat. Sometimes people put money in his hands, but a Restoni could not beg. The poor creature's senses appeared to be almost gone.

Neither Lorini nor his servant recognised the disease of drunkenness in his face, and it was some time before their suspicions were aroused. It was evident that he was very ill, but he refused with energy to see a doctor, fearing that from him they would learn the truth, and knowing how the Italians detest debauchery. "All that he wanted," he said, "was food and rest." So they put him into a spare room, and Antonio shared with him his meals. Sometimes he tried to make himself useful in the house, but

Antonio found that he could do better without him—his hands trembled as if he had the palsy.

Once only Lorini began to reproach him gently with having plotted against Maddalena and himself. But Restoni denied everything in a loud and querulous voice, declaring that if his generous benefactor believed in such a calumny he would relieve him of his presence at once; he would go to the woods and die. Whenever afterwards Lorini seemed disposed to allude to the past, Restoni looked at him with the eyes of a cat under an upraised arm. So he said no more. But Restoni, who now hated his daughter and her husband as he had once hated the Marchese, resumed his old habit of fabrication, and contrived to invent a very plausible tale.

“Julie,” he said, “was certainly sent into Maddalena’s service by the Baroness Sackowsky. It was she who intercepted all the letters. I myself had not anything to do with that; I was told of it afterwards when the mischief was done. Then this man Atkins proposed for Maddalena’s hand, and I refused. In the first place, Signor Marchese, the man was a bourgeois; I did not choose that my daughter should marry below her rank.” Here

Eugenio smiled, and Restoni, looking for a moment discomfited, said, "I have never told you that I am descended from one of the highest families in Florence. My father was a prince; my mother was privately married to him, but——"

"I understand," said Lorini; "but continue."

"I had also another reason for refusing this man," said Restoni. "I do not wish to deceive you, Signor Marchese; I do not wish to pretend that I am a thoroughly disinterested man. My daughter was earning a large salary, which she left at my disposal. Engagements were offered to her for Paris, Vienna, and St. Petersburg. My enemies may perhaps have told you that I helped to bring about that marriage. But surely, Signor Marchese, you must see that it could not have been to my interest to do so. They may have told you that I was intimate with this Signor Atkins. It is true that I had feelings of friendship for the man; I cherished that viper in my bosom. I heaped benefits upon him; I gave him all except my daughter. I said to him, 'Signor Atkins, in the first place, I do not wish my daughter to marry at all; I wish her to remain an artist; and, in the second place, if she does marry, it must be with

one of her own countrymen and of her own rank.' I did not tell him that my birth was illegitimate, you see," added Restoni, with an askant look. "I said to him, moreover, 'there is the Signor Marchese dei Lorini. He is our benefactor : he used once to have an affection for my girl. Unhappily, we have quarrelled ; but I trust that we shall yet be reconciled some day. I cannot think of marrying my daughter without speaking first to him. I do not suppose that he has ever intended to do her the honour of offering her his hand ; but——'"

"But I wrote to you, offering to marry Maddalena," said Lorini.

"Ah, cursed Julie!" cried Restoni, clenching his hands ; "then you intercepted that letter too. Ah ! Signor Marchese—ah, Eugenio ! permit me so to call you—what misery that letter would have saved me from ! Ay, and what shame from my daughter," he added, turning up his eyes. "Well, well," he sighed, "let me end this sad story now that I have begun. Atkins bribed Julie, who had great influence over Maddalena. Ah ! what a monster that girl was ! She wished to make her mistress dislike her profession : so she invented

scandals, and spread them about, and then repeated them to Maddalena. She said everything that she could to discourage her with her art, and sent people into the gallery to hiss. At the end of the season I spoke to Maddalena about her engagements. She had managers writing to her every day, and receiving from her only evasive replies.

“ ‘Oh ! I know not what to do,’ she said. ‘I am sick of the stage. I would rather marry Mr. Atkins and settle down for life.’

“ ‘And Eugenio ?’ said I.

‘She shrugged her shoulders. ‘He has not condescended to answer my letters,’ she said.

“ ‘But still,’ said I, ‘he is our benefactor, and I do not think that——’

“ ‘Our benefactor !’ said she, ‘Pooh ! I have to thank my voice, not him. The manager of the Pergola would have done as much.’

“ ‘Well, Maddalena,’ said I, ‘I will not argue the matter with you ; but as for marrying this bourgeois, understand me plainly, I will never allow it.’

“ Well, Signor Marchese, the season had only just concluded when the Signor Atkins gave an evening party. He took my daughter aside into the conser-

vatory, and I observed them whispering together. The next morning Maddalena made an excuse for going out by herself directly after breakfast, and I received a letter from her by the mid-day post. She had just been married to Atkins, and they left London for the Continent that day.

"As you may imagine, Signor Marchese, I was not much pleased with this intelligence; and I was forced to borrow money to keep me till they returned from their honeymoon abroad. Then I went down to their house in the country, and first of all Maddalena told me why she had married this man."

"And why had she?" asked Eugenio.

Restoni shook his head.

"Do not ask me that, Signor Marchese," he said, and he resolutely refused to reply. Then he went on:—

"She took me into her husband, whose face was full of malicious triumph. 'Well, Restoni,' he said, 'I suppose you have come down here to get some money out of me?'

"'I am without money, Signor Atkins,' said I; 'my daughter has always supported me, at least of late.'

“‘That is the fashion in Italy, I suppose,’ said he, with a sneer, ‘for the young birds to feed the old.’

“‘Signor Atkins,’ said I, ‘I have been unfortunate——’

“‘Oh, I know all about that,’ said he; ‘you have been a gambler. My wife has told me everything. Now, you need not think that we intend to pander to your vices. You managed to live somehow before your daughter went on the stage, and you will be able to live better now, for she will be off your hands. Here is a hundred pounds to take you out there and give you a start.’

“I attempted to remonstrate; but he said, ‘Restoni, when I asked you for your daughter’s hand, I offered to settle a handsome sum on you for life. You would not have that. Well, now you must have what you can get.’

“I appealed to Maddalena, but she only shrugged her shoulders, and said, ‘It is not my business, I am my husband’s property.’ And what do you think, Signor Marchese? I knelt before that girl, whom I shall never see again. I prayed her to bless me before I went, and she refused. I took the money—and the rest you know.”

Restoni was a thorough master of the art of lying. He simulated to perfection the candid look, and the clear, unfaltering voice of truth. No wonder, indeed, that he deceived others ; frequently, for the moment, he deceived himself. As the actor's cheeks sometimes flush with real rage, and as his eyes shed real tears, so Restoni, carried away by a vivid imagination, almost persuaded himself that these were real wrongs that he had suffered. And when he spoke of her refusal to bless him, which, as the reader knows, was founded upon fact, he burst into a wail of genuine and child-like grief.

Lorini, who had begun to listen with incredulity, and only in order to be amused, felt sure that he had been in some way badly treated. They might have given him more money than this miserable hundred pounds ; he might have exaggerated their coldness and barbarity ; but still here was a living fact before his eyes. Here was the miserable creature, diseased, perhaps dying, with no food in his body, and no clothes upon his back. Lorini promised him a home as long as he had one to give him. He did not judge a ruined gambler so harshly as he would have done a twelvemonth before. He had learnt from

himself how difficult it is to struggle with a passion. Perhaps there would be more charity if there were less rigid virtue in the world. It now seemed to Lorini almost natural that Restoni should have spent at the Tómbola the money which had been given him to buy his daughter food. He could now understand that men do not commit such crimes in cold blood, but are driven to them by an impulse which they are unable to resist.

Eugenio had no cause to feel rancour against Restoni. He had never been so happy in his life as he was now—his time equally divided between toil and thought. He dwelt in an artist's paradise, encircled by houris whom he himself created. He remembered that it was Restoni who had helped to cast him out of the sunshine in which he had been basking his life away.

Restoni informed him that he suffered in the chest, and had found that the waters did him good. He was strong enough, he said, to walk to Baden if the Marchese would pay for his carriage back. So he walked to Baden every day, drank several glasses of raw cognac, swallowed some lozenges to dis-

guise the smell, and tottered back on foot, saying always that he had made the driver put him down at a little distance off. But one day he took too much, forgot his lozenges, and came home manifestly drunk.

He complained bitterly when Lorini refused to trust him again with money. He had arrived at that stage when drink becomes a necessity; when the sot is warned by instinct to beware of abstinence; for it is thus that *delirium tremens* is almost always produced. It is the stimulant which destroys, the stimulant which saves.

Restoni still kept up the farce of drinking the waters, and made a daily pilgrimage to Baden. Presently Antonio, who kept the accounts, observed that there was a perpetual *deficit*. This puzzled and annoyed him: he racked his brain to recollect if he could have purchased something which he had forgotten to put down. Every evening he took his little book and added up the inexorable figures again and again.

One night he was aroused by a phantom which bore the semblance of Restoni. It glided softly to the chair on which his clothes were hung, extracted

some money from the pockets, and disappeared. Antonio took a brick out of the floor when Restoni was absent, and hid his money under it. He noticed that Restoni watched him for some days afterwards, but took care that he should discover nothing.

But Restoni still went to Baden, and one night he came home drunk again. At the same time Antonio missed some silver forks and spoons, and Lorini a copy of Dante, illustrated with rare engravings. They went up to his room. It was filled with a disagreeable smell. They listened to his heavy stertorous breathing. He was fast asleep. Antonio uttered an exclamation of fright, and Lorini perceived that his breath was luminous—a phenomenon owing to the noxious gases which had been generated within him by the alcohol. They lighted a candle, and Antonio, having rummaged in his pockets, found a pawnbroker's duplicate for the missing articles. They redeemed it and said nothing, but they took care for the future to lock up everything that was of value.

Restoni knew that he had been detected, but showed no signs of shame. He conversed affably

with Antonio, and even bantered him when he saw him putting away the plate which he had once purloined. He now appeared to be rapidly losing the use of his faculties. His utterance was habitually thick and inarticulate. He talked fast, but only half-pronounced his words. His mendacity had become monstrous ; he told lies incessantly without aim or purpose, often to his own disadvantage, and contradicted himself at every moment. He hung continually about Lorini, fawning on him ; and constantly assuring him of his gratitude and love. His face had now been rendered hideous ; his manners, which had once been fascinating, had become ludicrous—the grimaces of gesture. Lorini bore with him patiently for a long time, but he had now become buried in his work ; he was nervous and excitable, impatient of interruption ; he was disgusted by Restoni's appearance, and by his conversation ; he found that this apparition disturbed his conceptions, and bade Antonio keep it out of his sight. Restoni wept when he was forbidden to go to his master, as he now called him ; but was soon consoled when Antonio asked him some questions about his noble ancestors, or about the villa which

he had possessed before his daughter's education swallowed up all his means.

But still he went out every morning and came home late at night. He did not go to Baden now. When questioned by Antonio, he said, "No, my friend, I have given up the waters. I fear that nothing will do me good on this side of the tomb."

"Where do you go then all day long?" asked Antonio repeatedly, and each time that he asked the question, the fertile Restoni gave a different reply. Once he said that he loved to spend his days in the forest, admiring the scenery; the effect of the snow upon the trees was so very charming. Another time he said that a friend of his at Baden was about to contract with the Grand Duke for a fall of timber; and as he (Restoni) had once owned a pine forest or two in the Apennines, he had been asked to give an opinion on the trees. On another occasion, having exacted from Antonio a promise of secrecy, he had whispered to him his conviction that there was gold in the mountains above Baden, and that it was washed down into the valley by the winter torrents. And once he had said, in a solemn voice, "Antonio, my friend, you ask me why I

wander all day long among the mountains and the woods. Shall I tell you what I do? I reflect upon the uncertainty of human happiness, and I prepare myself for immortality."

But as Restoni always smelt very strong of brandy when he returned from these excursions, Antonio's curiosity became uncontrollable. One morning he followed Restoni for at least two miles through the forest. At length he stopped, and having looked cautiously round him, pulled up some moss and leaves, drew out a bottle, which he held up to the light, and apostrophized in the most affectionate terms; then, giving a yell of delight, knocked off the head against a branch, emptied it at a draught, and staggered past the concealed Antonio, his lips slimy, his eyes rolling and convulsed. The next day he went in a totally different direction. It was evident that he had a store of brandy bottles concealed in different places. "But where could it all have come from?" said Antonio.

In a few days the mystery was explained. Lorini received a bill from a wine-shop in Baden. On inquiry he found that Restoni, representing himself to be his servant, had ordered it in his name, and

had taken it away himself. They paid the bill, and cautioned all the tradesmen in the town.

In a short time, Antonio observed that Restoni became restless and uneasy. He still went out as usual, but it was probable that his stock was becoming exhausted. Antonio heard that he had been to the wine-shop to give another order, and that, failing there, he had made the round of all the taverns and hotels.

One evening, as they were sitting together by the kitchen fire, Restoni, who for some time had been fidgeting about, got up and said :

“The Marchese must feel very dull there upstairs all by himself. I will go and converse with him.”

“No, stop where you are ; he does not want to be conversed with. He is busy.”

“What is he doing then ?”

“What is he doing? Why, have not I told you a dozen times that he is writing an opera ?”

“Antonio, caro mio,” said Restoni, in a caressing voice. “Why do we live in this miserable little cottage? Why do we not live, as beseems our rank, in a villa, or a château ?”

"Bah! it is a caprice: my master has taken a fancy to seclusion."

"Yes; but one need not live in a hovel for that, you know. One can seclude oneself excellently in a palace."

"Yes; but you see the Marchese is an artist as well as a noble, and of course has his whims, and this is one."

Restoni gave a sly look. "He is not too rich now, the Marchese."

"Who told you that?" said Antonio, with a derisive laugh.

"He did," replied Restoni. "My noble benefactor told me so himself. 'My dear Jacopo,' he said (that was when I first came here), 'my own parents are dead, but I shall always regard you as my father. I am no longer the Marchese dei Lorini; I am Eugenio the artist. I am poor now, but while I have a crust to eat, I will share it with you.' I was touched to the heart when he said this," continued Restoni, wiping his eyes, "and I said to him, 'Signor Marchese, I will not ask you by what misfortunes you have been impoverished. I know from my own experience what agony it is to re-open

ancient wounds ; but I accept from you the refuge and the alms which, offered by a bourgeois, I would reject with scorn.' Oh, Antonio, is it not a touching spectacle, this, of two ruined nobles under a cotter's roof,—both proud, both beggared : the one labouring as an artist, the other conversing familiarly with a servant, and even consenting to drink with him a bottle of wine ?”

“Your family's the older of the two, is it not ?” asked Antonio, professing to ignore this delicate hint.

“My father was the Duke di . . . i” said Restoni, proudly. “We trace our pedigree with ease to the time of the Roman Republic. Then I do not mind confessing to you, that it becomes a little obscure.”

“Then you are a Roman after all. But I thought you said your father was the Prince . . . a.”

“Antonio,” said Restoni, sternly, “you, with the base and sordid ideas of a peasant, cannot understand my feelings. My noble father has been prevented from publicly recognising me by domestic and political causes. I, who know that not only his peace of mind, but his life depends upon my secrecy, am therefore justified in using a little equivocation

upon this subject. When, therefore, at an early period of our friendship, I told you that my father was the Prince a, I am not ashamed to say that I deceived you. But now, after having learnt to place full confidence in you, dear Antonio, I confess that my father was the—was the——”

“The Marchese o,” replied Antonio, slyly.

“Yes, the Marchese o,” replied Restoni, after a little hesitation, for he had forgotten the name which he had mentioned first. “As you justly remarked, we are an older family than the Lorini. Between ourselves you know, Antonio, his title is mere tinsel,—an Austrian creation ; and as for his ancestors, what were they, after all, but like the other Florentines,—like the Medici themselves,—wretched wool-weavers, and money-lenders, and brokers, Atkinses of the middle ages. Antonio, the best blood of Sicily runs in my veins. On my escutcheon——”

“Who was your mother ?” said Antonio.

Antonio gave a lofty smile. “That is a state secret,” he said, “and I once swore it should never cross my lips.”

"But you cannot refuse anything to your friend Antonio."

Restoni shook his head. "It is a long story, and I cannot talk without refreshment. Let us have a bottle of wine over it."

"It is only the wine of the country," said Antonio.

"Well, I don't mind a glass of brandy," said Restoni, with an expression of indifference.


Antonio shook his head, went out of the room into a parlour, which opened out of the kitchen. He was stealthily followed by Restoni, who saw him open a buffet, which seemed to be full of bottles, and take out one on which was written in gilt letters on a red label *Affenthaler*.

"Now," said Antonio, after they had drunk some glasses, "let us have this grand secret."

"What secret?"

"Why, your mother's name."

"My mother's name," said Restoni, absently; then recalling his idea by a prodigious effort, "Ah, yes, my mother's name! Well, that, my friend, will explain everything; how I have been neglected; how I have been denied; how I have been for-



bidden to approach my birth-place ; how I have been plundered of parental love. Antonio, swear to me that you will never utter again what I tell you now ; the life of a man, the honour of a woman, the safety of a kingdom, depend upon your silence. Hist ! my father was the Marchese di . . . o, and my mother was—*the Queen !*”

This was too much for Antonio, who was old enough to recollect Restoni's mother giving him the breast, while she stood on the Lung' Arno, and sold melons by the slice. He made an excuse for leaving the room, let out his laughter, and came back to find Restoni with the bottle raised to his lips.

Our friend Jacopo might be easily turned from an idea, but he always returned to it with a pertinacity which nothing could resist.

“But tell me, Antonio,” he said, “how is it that our Eugenio is so poor ?”

“He lent money to a friend,” said Antonio, curtly.

“Ah, poverino !” sighed Restoni. “Well know I what that means. And now he is writing an opera. What will be the good of that ?”

“Why, he will sell it to a manager of course, and make himself rich again.”

"But why should he shut himself up so? That false child of mine—Maddalena—she learnt her art without going into a cell like a hermit."

"Corpo di Bacco! what a man!" cried Antonio, "Can you not see the difference between making things and selling them? For one is required solitude and abstraction, for the other a voice, that is all. That is what my master told me himself; and he composes and sings too."

Restoni shook his head. "Ah, my poor Antonio," he said, with a smile of pity, "how blind you are! Do you not see that Eugenio——" here Restoni pointed to the bottle.

"What!" cried Antonio, bursting into a scream of laughter.

"I do not blame him," said Restoni, gravely. "He has suffered misfortune, and he overtaxes his brain. But it is always a sad thing when a young man attempts to drown sorrow or to stimulate his imagination with ardent spirits."

"Why, he is the most temperate man alive."

"Then what means that buffet?" said Restoni, sternly. "What means that brandy-bottle which you take up-stairs to him every day?"

"Bah! he takes a *gloria* after dinner like most people; that is all he ever drinks."

"In fact," said Restoni, smacking his lips, "a cognac with a coffee is not a bad thing. Could you not make me a cup of coffee, Antonio?"

"No, not now; it is time to go to bed."

"Well, then, the cognac without the coffee," suggested Jacopo, humbly.

"Come," said Antonio, rising.

"No, no," said Restoni, trembling, "not yet. I hate to go to bed; I never get to sleep, and sometimes I see nasty things. Let us talk a little about this opera. When will it be finished?"

"Perhaps in half a year. Ah! there is the piano. Hush! This is the dreaming scene. Is it not sweet music, Restoni?"

"Yes, yes," he said, "it is sweet and soothing as—as the Kirschwasser of the Black Forest. I could soon sleep if I heard that every night."

"Now the soprano begins to sing. When I hear this air it always makes the tears come into my eyes."

"So did the Kirschwasser with me at first," muttered Restoni, "it was so very strong."

When the music had finished, Antonio struck the

table with his hand. "Müller and Oppen at Vienna would give a thousand thalers for that air alone," he cried.

Restoni's eyes gleamed. Then, yawning, he took his rushlight and, bidding Antonio "Good-night," went up to bed.

The next day Lorini, having returned from his morning's walk, missed his manuscripts from the piano, on which he usually laid them. He called Antonio. They hunted for them everywhere, but in vain. It was clear that they could not have been mislaid—the room was so small. They looked at each other with anxious eyes. Then Antonio cried with a curse, "It is Restoni! Like a fool I told him last night that Müller and Oppen at Vienna would pay a thousand thalers for your duet."

Lorini became as white as a sheet, staggered, and almost fell. For some moments he could not speak. He had felt, as he said afterwards, something like a flame of fire pass through his brain.

"O my God, my God!" he murmured, "this is too much! He has robbed me of my thoughts—of precious thoughts which I have written down, but few of which I can recall. Besides, they will be pub-

lished—my duet will go through Europe like wild-fire : it is the gem of my opera ; it is the best effort of my brain. Oh, Antonio, advise me, help me ! What is to be done ?”

“Everything,” said Antonio, briskly. “We shall find Restoni at Vienna, if we do not overtake him before he gets to the Baden station. How on earth will he get the money to pay his fare ? But, come, Signor, we have not a minute to lose.”

But they had already lost a minute, and arrived at the station as the express was leaving it. They found that a man answering to their description of Restoni had taken a ticket to Vienna. They were compelled to wait the whole day at Baden, and started by the night train. During the journey Lorini did not sleep for a moment ; nor did Antonio, who watched his master with anxiety. The poor man (whose agonies can be understood only by a painter, a writer, or a composer,) crouched in a corner of the carriage with his head upon his breast, sometimes bursting into fits of maniacal wrath. He anticipated in his mind every misfortune that could possibly arrive. Restoni would get drunk and lose the music on the way. He would have sold it to the

publishers, and they would pretend that they had not received it, or would make copies of the airs and publish them before the rest of the opera was completed. It was daybreak when they arrived at Vienna. Antonio wished him to go to a hotel and take some hours of sleep, while he stood on guard before the publisher's shop. But Lorini would not do this. He said that it would be impossible for him to sleep, and that he should be better in the open air. So he remained in the street, sometimes pacing slowly and moodily along, sometimes walking at a terrific pace. At length the shop shutters began to be taken down, and then they were obliged to wait two hours before one of the partners arrived.

When they were introduced into his room, Lorini at first could not recollect a word of French. He uttered some confused phrases in Italian, and then cried, in a savage voice, "Monsieur, ma musique ! rendez-moi ma musique !"

Antonio explained to the publisher that some music manuscripts belonging to his master had been stolen by a person named Restoni, whom they had traced to this shop.

The publisher, giving an anxious glance at

Lorini, left the room and returned with a packet which he opened. Lorini gave a cry of delight, tore the papers from his hand, and rapidly turned them over, saw that they were all there, and, giving a low gasp, fainted away.

The publisher informed them afterwards that the packet had been brought to him the night before by an old man, decently dressed. He had said that it contained the fragments of an opera, composed by his son Eugenio Restoni, who, unhappily, had taken to hard drinking and had died at the premature age of twenty-one. He had wept in relating this circumstance; the packet had been taken, and an answer had been promised him in the course of the forenoon.

"You had not even opened it, then?" said Antônio.

"Not till this moment," replied the publisher, who was somewhat surprised to notice a triumphant glance pass from the servant to the master, and the latter's reassured air.

In an hour's time Restoni made his appearance. He was dressed in some old clothes belonging to Lorini, and, as they afterwards found out, he had pawned some new ones to obtain the money for his

journey. Eugenio was so happy at regaining his manuscripts that he did not think of reproaching Restoni; but, after the former had gone to bed, Antonio played a little comedy in which a sabred official was introduced, and which frightened the poor wretch almost to death.

Antonio saw that his master's close application to work had already affected his brain; he persuaded him to remain some days at Vienna. He did so; went to the theatre, studied the orchestra, and picked up some valuable hints from instrumentalists, whom he consulted about his opera. This change of life also freshened his mind, and he returned to his solitude at Lichtenthal more enthusiastic even than before.

He had a long conversation with Antonio about Restoni.

"Let us put him into an asylum," said Antonio.

Lorini shrugged his shoulders. "It would be dangerous to try that," said he; "he might persuade the doctors that *we* were mad. That man would talk over anybody who did not know him."

"In fact, he has the tongue of the old serpent,"

said Antonio. "Well, let us put him with a family."

"No," replied Lorini, nobly, "he would rob them as he has robbed us, and they would send him to prison. He is not a madman, and he is not a thief. He is a drunkard. In all countries there ought to be an asylum for these poor imbeciles, but as there is not——"

"Then we will bear with him," said Antonio. "I will buy an iron box for your music, so that when he sets the house on fire, as he will some day, your opera shall not be destroyed. But he shall have no more drink—curse him."

Antonio kept his word. He set the police upon him; they warned the pawnbroker to take nothing more from him. Restoni succeeded in selling the gridiron which the former refused to a peasant of the Black Forest, who was passing along the road. But the police, taunted by Antonio for this oversight on their part, dogged poor Restoni as soon as he set his foot in town; they detected him in false rags begging at the steps of the Trink-halle, and drove him off; and even when by some miraculous expedient he had earned a few kreutzers, and was about to enter a

wine-shop, he would feel a hand tap him on the shoulder, and a menacing voice would forbid him to go in.

The result of this will already have been foreseen by those who know anything of medicine. Restoni showed signs of uneasiness; he became restless; he wandered vaguely hither and thither, like a dog which is going mad. He asked permission of Antonio to let him sleep on the floor of his room, saying that he was afraid of being alone. Antonio consented, but the man's groans and exclamations during the night prevented him from sleeping. At last one night Lorini was awoke by a knock at his door, and by the terrified voice of his servant, which implored him to come immediately to Restoni. He went, and found him raving. Tossing about on the bed, with his wild and haggard eyes fixed always on one corner of the room, he cursed Atkins, Julie, and Maddalena, whom he saw standing there like phantoms, deriding him. He complained of the rats which kept running over him, and of the black things on the walls. He shrieked, bounded up, ran to the window and tried to fling himself out. They strapped him down upon Antonio's bed. Then he

fancied that he saw the Devil, who was angling for him with a silver hook. His face elongated itself till it resembled that of a fish. Attempting to raise himself, he snapped in the air, uttering savage cries.

They sent for a physician from Baden, who gave him opium. He told them that it was an attack of delirium tremens, and that it had been caused by his forced sobriety. "When he wakes up," he said, "he will have recovered. We must place him on a drink-diet, which you will lessen gradually and with great care, till at length it will be safe to deprive him altogether of such stimulants."

When Restoni came to his senses, the delirium was passed, but he appeared too weak to leave his room. He drank the doses of brandy which were given him with an eagerness terrible to see. When they refused to give him more, he swore at them in a feeble voice: he said that they were shutting him up in a prison to amuse themselves with his agony; that they gave him enough to tantalise him, that was all.

Thus three days passed. On the third evening, Antonio, as he was seated by the kitchen fire, saw

something white glide past the door. At the same moment it flashed upon him that he had left the buffet unlocked. He ran to the parlour, but it was too late: Restoni sprang past him with a bottle in each hand, rushed up to his own room and locked himself in. Antonio shouted for his master; they broke] open the door, and discovered Restoni upon the bed, one bottle lying empty on the floor, the other between his hands.

"Go for the doctor, Antonio," cried Lorini.

Restoni shook his head, raised himself a little, and muttered the word "*dying*." He beckoned Lorini to him, and after several efforts, whispered in his ear,

"She said—she said that she would marry him to spite you."

Then a frightful sneer crossed his lips. He stretched out his arms, and falling back expired with his eyes fixed upon Lorini.

CHAPTER V.

THE corpse of Richard Atkins was stretched upon the bed. By its side stood the rector, the parish doctor, the butler, and a rustic policeman.

"You say then, John," said the doctor, "that you went to call your master as usual?"

"Yes, sir; at half-past seven o'clock."

"And you found him in his bath, dead, with his face under the water—eh?"

"Exactly, sir."

"Very good, then; you may go."

The doctor was a portly, red-faced man, with an appearance half clerical, half sporting—a white cravat, a black coat, and a red face above; below, an abdomen of provincial dimensions, and a pair of cord trousers fitting tightly to his legs. He took a large pinch of snuff, and said:

"From the appearance of the body, which I have

carefully examined, and from what our friend John says, I feel myself justified in asserting that this is a case—I may add, a clear and unquestionable case—of *asphyxia by submersion*.”

“Is it, really?” said the rector, in a plaintive voice. “Dear, dear, what a lesson to us all!”

“And what be that, then, sir?” asked the policeman, who considered it his duty to understand the case.

“In plain words,” said the doctor, taking another pinch of snuff, “poor Mr. Atkins has been drowned.”

“What, drowned in a bath!” cried the rector. “I never heard of such a thing.”

“Haw! haw! haw!” laughed the policeman. “Well, that be a good ’un, however!”

“My good sir,” said the doctor, tapping his snuff-box with an irritated finger, “I know perfectly well what I’m talking about. I suppose you think a man must fall into the Thames before he can be drowned.”

“I must confess I do not think a common hip-bath is *quite* deep enough,” said the rector, with a knowing smile, which produced a fresh guffaw from the policeman.

"Oh, you don't!" said the doctor. "Policeman, pour a little water into that wash-hand basin—a very little. There, that will do. Now, Mr. Parson, that's not very deep, is it? but I'll undertake to drown you in it, as dead as a door nail. Will you try?"

The clergyman politely declined.

"Haw! haw! haw!" laughed the policeman. "Parson's afeerd as I shall take 'ee up for't and get 'ee hanged may-be. Haw! haw! haw!"

The rector became suddenly grave. "My brethren," said he, "this is no place for levity. Remember, we are in the presence of the dead."

"Ignorant people," said the doctor, testily, "suppose that the whole body must be plunged under water to cause drowning; but if there is enough to cover the mouth and nostrils for a sufficient time, death must inevitably ensue."

"Well now, the next question is, what caused his death?" said the clergyman.

"Ah, there you want to know too much," said the doctor. "Drowning seems a simple thing, but I recollect when I was a student I couldn't get any one to tell me how it causes death, and I couldn't

find it out in any book. Some said it was due to the introduction of water into the air-passage ; others, to a collapsed state of the lungs ; others, to congestion of the cerebral vessels ; others——”

“I don’t mean that,” said the rector. “I mean, what has caused the drowning. I cheerfully allow that a man can be drowned in a bath, or a wash-hand basin ; but it can hardly be by accident, I presume. You couldn’t say that he got out of his depth.”

“Yes, now we be coming to the point,” said the policeman. “Martha Ann, she came down to me and woke me out of my sleep, for I’d been on the rounds all night, and she says to me, says she, ‘There’s been foul play up at the gret house, and you’re wanted,’ she said, so up I gets, and here I comes, and now what is ut ?”

The doctor tapped his box in an undecided manner, and took a meditative pinch.

“Having established *asphyxia by submersion* as the proximate cause of death, I was about to examine into the ultimate causes, when interrupted by my reverend friend. Now, in my humble opinion, there is only one which deserves a moment’s atten-

tion. I am forced, gentlemen, to state as my belief, as my firm conviction, that Mr. Atkins was drowned——”

“While under an epileptic fit,” said a voice behind him.


The doctor turned round. Two men had come in unobserved. One of them was already gliding round the room, glancing at everything, and stopping to inspect minutely the window fastenings, and the door which led into Maddalena’s dressing-room. The other, who had just spoken, presented his card to the doctor, with a gracious bow.

“Dr. Charles Darlington !” he said. “What ! of St. Bridget’s ?”

Darlington bowed.

“I am sure, sir,” said the doctor, looking a little confused, “that I am delighted to have your most valuable assistance. You think, then——”

“I think then, as you do, sir,” said Darlington, looking at him with a little twinkle in his eyes, “that the deceased was drowned while under the influence of an epileptic seizure. Only pray excuse my taking the words out of your mouth.”



"Don't mention it, sir, don't mention it," said the doctor, getting very red.

"Then no personal violence," said the rector, "has been the cause of——"


"None whatever," replied Darlington.

"What, ain't he be' murdered arter all?" said the policeman, in an injured tone.

"And what reasons have you," said the rector, with a suspicious look, "for supposing that it was owing to epilepsy——"

"You observe these *punctiform extravasations*, as they are called," said Darlington, pointing to some small red spots on the temples of the body. "They are caused by excessive congestion and consequent rupture of small blood-vessels, which drowning by violence would not produce. Then, here is the tongue bitten—we could not have a better proof. The foam has been washed away by the water in the bath, but I dare say you will find there a slight tinge of blood."

"I never knew that poor Mr. Atkins was epileptic," said the clergyman, who, having made up his mind that he had been murdered, felt disinclined to change it.



"Possibly not," said Darlington, drily; "these matters are usually kept secret in families. Well, Simcox, what do you make out of it?"

"Nobody been in the room from outside, sir, and as you see, there are no marks of violence on the neck, as there would be if the face had been held under water."

"It is curious," said the rector, "that the butler should not have said anything about Mr. Atkins being epileptic, is it not?"

"Damn him, yes!" muttered the provincial doctor to himself. "I should like to knock his teeth down his throat."

Darlington spoke to the detective for a few moments, in a whisper, and then rang the bell.

The butler came up.

"Now, sir," said Simcox, "have the kindness to look at me in the face. You know who I am, don't you? Well, then, you'd better be careful. What did you do as soon as you found your master in the bath?"

"I took him out and laid him on the bed, and tried to revive him," said the butler.

"Very good, and what did you do next?"

"I went and told missis—Mr. Atkins's sister that is—and then we went to Mrs. Atkins's room and found——"

"There, we don't want to hear anything about that. Who did you send for?"

"Doctor and the policeman, sir."

"And what message did you send, if you please?"

"I sent to say that Mr. Atkins was dead, that was all."


"You sent and told me that your master had been murdered, you infernal liar," cried the doctor.

"Well, sir, I'm sure I thought that he had," whined the man.

"Now then, just answer me one question, 'How long has your master had fits?'"

The wretch began to prevaricate, but quailed beneath that terrible eye. "Ever since I have been in his service," said he.

Simcox seized him by the collar, and dragged him to the bed-side. "Look here," said he, pointing to the bitten tongue, "d'ye know what that means, eh? You've seen that before, haven't you? What made you send for me, with your cock-and-bull stories, and



trying to take in the doctor, eh ? Now then, I want to see Miss Atkins."

As he said this, they heard a gasp from outside the door, and the rustle of a dress retreating swiftly.

"Case of conspiracy, sir," said the detective to Darlington, drawing him aside. "Parties want to proceed, d'ye think ?"

"Oh, no," [said Darlington, shaking his head ; "besides, you see, nothing could be established."

"No, sir, that's true. We've nipped it in the bud. It would have ripened beautifully if we'd held off. I should like to see the woman, though."

"So you shall," said Darlington, "and make her leave the house."

"All right, sir. They must stop here till the inquest is over, to give evidence, but they shall clear out after that, the pair of them."

Darlington was now anxious to go to Maddalena, who he knew to be suffering tortures, but on the landing outside the door he was intercepted by the doctor.

It had not been the first time that Darlington had covered a colleague's ignorance, and the medical etiquette on such occasions is to avoid allusion to

the subject. But this worthy provincial had the bad taste to feel gratitude and to express it.

"You saved me from making a fool of myself, Dr. Darlington," said he, in a rough voice, "and I thank ye for't. I should never have heard the last of it down here. The country's not like London, worse luck."

"Well, it is only natural that four eyes should be able to see more than two, you know," said Darlington.

"Ay, sir; it's very kind of you to put it in that light, but your eyes saw in a moment what mine hadn't seen in an hour."

"Yes, and I will tell you why. The first time I saw Mr. Atkins I suspected that he was an epileptic. So I came into the room half prepared to find what I did."

"Well, of course you had a great advantage over me so far. I never attended on him, nor ever saw him, not to say close. But, ah! we have no chance with you Londoners. In a place like this a man soon forgets the little he ever learnt. There's nothing done here in a regular way, except a little gout and rheumatism. Accidents, of course, one can

never depend upon, and what's the use of a case like this once in five years ? There couldn't be a worse county than this. Now, when I was a young man practising in Smithfield, and taking in free patients, it was a very different kettle of fish. My goodness !" said the doctor, voluptuously smacking his lips, "that *was* a neighbourhood. Something like disease there—and a nice variety of it too ! I was a fool ever to leave it and come down in a place like this, where one never gets a new book, nor sees a *Lancet*, nor gets any one to talk to who knows more than oneself. I know more about crops now than I do about anatomy."

"Certainly," said Darlington, "there is no place like London. We not only have every facility with books and patients, we learn also so much from social intercourse among ourselves. The conversation of distinguished medical men is a vast and instructive unwritten literature ; there are many whose minds are stored with the experience of a life-time, and who have scarcely written a line. Besides, in London almost all the specialists of England are collected. One has given his life-time to diseases of the liver, another to those of the heart, another to those of the brain. One learns in

a few minutes from such men as these what could only have been discovered by years of patient investigation, and by the comparison of a thousand cases. But now you will excuse me, will you not? I must go and make my report to Mrs. Atkins."

"Cheer up, Maddalena!" he said, entering her room; "your husband is dead, but he has not been murdered."

"Holy Virgin, I thank thee!" she cried, sinking on her knees.

After she had become more calm, she asked him what was this epilepsy of which he had died. He explained to her briefly the nature of this disease, which in ancient times and among savages still is ascribed to demoniac possession. He told her how the attacks are often preceded by the warning *aura*, which is supposed to feel like a current of air—the breath of the approaching disease. He told her of the fear which comes over the sufferer, of the unearthly shriek which he sometimes utters, of the savage convulsions into which he falls, and how attack following attack, his face assumes a peculiar

appearance, and his mind loses its faculties one by one.

"And why did you not tell me of this before?" she asked.

"You had troubles enough, my poor girl," he replied, "and you could not have been of any use."

Miss Atkins and the butler left the house immediately after the coroner's inquest. The next day the family solicitor came down, accompanied by another who represented the interests of the aforesaid lady. A will was discovered locked up in a box, of which Miss Atkins had never been able to borrow the key. When the will was read everybody (except the lawyer who had drawn it up) was astounded. The deceased left the whole of his property to Maddalena, excepting a hundred a-year to his sister. It was thus he attempted to atone to the one and to revenge himself upon the other.

The first step which Maddalena took was to seek for her father. He was advertised for in all the papers. A private inquiry was set on foot, but they could only discover that he had sold his life annuity, and had gone abroad. Maddalena hoped that she

might find him at Florence, and made arrangements for going there. But something prompted her to look through her husband's papers before she left the house.

All his letters were tied up in separate bundles and labelled. She passed over packet after packet on matters relating to business. She opened one, on which was written in a round, firm hand, "*From Miss Jane Atkins.*" These were the letters which he had received from her during the honeymoon, and in which she had bitterly reproached him for marrying a Papist and a stage singer.

"And he never showed them to me!" she cried. "Ah! there was something noble in poor Richard's nature, after all."

The human heart melts towards the dead. Now that her husband was gone, Maddalena almost loved him. She clothed him, as women do their lovers, with ideal qualities; she imagined that he was generous and high-souled; that weakness was his only fault. "The poor invalid!" she murmured; "and weakness of mind was not a fault in him whose health this horrible illness had destroyed. He never spoke to me an unkind word. He allowed that

creature to torment me ; but when at length he was compelled to choose between us he was ready to drive her from the house."

As she thought of that last scene, and of the poor dying man clinging to her like a child, of his sad and prophetic words, she was blinded by her tears, and she determined to remain faithful to his memory. At that moment she avoided with horror the recollection of Eugenio ; for she remembered what it was that Eugenio had made her wish, and now that wish had been fulfilled. But these were sentiments which played only on the surface of the heart, and were soon made to disappear. She found a bundle of letters on which there was no label. As she opened them she caught sight of some Italian words. They were letters from her father, bearing the Baden post-mark, and had been written by him just before he had met the Marchese dei Lorini. As she read them they pierced her to the heart. They contained the last cries of a man in despair. He reproached her for not having written to him even once. " Oh, the wretches !" she cried ; " then they intercepted my letter as well." He told her of his poverty, his hunger, his disease. " I am a drunkard now," he

wrote, "and why? because with a glass of spirits I can stifle for a few moments my hunger and my thoughts." The last letter was awful in its brevity — "*Maddalena, I am dying; succour me!*"

From that moment she loathed the house and all that reminded her of her husband. If her father had died, his blood would be on this man, who was also dead. He had stopped these letters from weakness and in ignorance. But weakness and ignorance may be often crimes. What are most crimes, in fact, but dishonesty aggravated by a blunder?

She ordered a small trunk to be packed up; she would start the next morning to Baden-Baden. She had but enough hope to make her misery suspense. She felt that he was dead. The last letter had been dated months before. How long and dark were the hours of that night. She lay between two corpses.

She made that long journey alone. Her own maid had been discharged long ago by Miss Atkins, and one of these country girls would only have occasioned her trouble and perhaps delay.

As soon as she had arrived at Baden she asked the way to the cemetery. She saw a new tomb-

stone, hurried to it, and read upon it her father's name. She sat there for three hours. At length she rose. She felt weak and weary, now that she knew the worst.

But as she passed slowly down the street, her hand was seized and kissed.

"What, Antonio!" she cried.

"Yes, signorina, it is I."

"I am signora now, Antonio," she said, sadly. "I have been married."

Antonio looked at her widow's weeds. "You are very much changed, signora," he said.

"Yes, Antonio, I have gone through much trouble; and I have just seen my father's grave." Her lips began to quiver.

"We did not write to you, signora, not knowing your address."

Maddalena recognised the "we" with which an old servant in Italy speaks of his master. An indescribable sensation passed through her.

"What!" she cried, looking round her.

"No, signora, not here. He is in the Black Forest. I have come here to buy some music for him."

"Then—then the Marchese saw my father?"

"Ah, signora, he has been an angel!" exclaimed Antonio. And he told her all that has been related to the reader. He did not veil the vices of Restoni, for he loved Maddalena less than his master, whose magnanimity he desired to extol.

Maddalena told Antonio about the letters.

"Ah!" she sighed; "had I been here I might have saved him."

"No, signora," said Antonio, "nothing could have saved your father. They say it is wrong to speak ill of the dead, but it can never be wrong to tell the truth. You do not know what a man he was."

"Antonio! Antonio!" cried Maddalena, reproachfully. "How can you speak against him now? He is dead. Look behind you at that white stone."

"If he had been only a gambler and a drunkard one might have pitied him."


"Not a word more!" cried Maddalena, turning upon him like a wild animal at bay.

"But he deserved to have his letters intercepted, he who intercepted yours and ours."

"What—what do you say, Antonio?"

"That is all I have to say against him, signora."

"But tell me—these letters——"



"I forgot that I was speaking to his daughter, signora, and that the girls in our country think it right to adore their parents—let them be what they may."

"Antonio, these letters—these intercepted letters—tell me at once, I command you, sir! Oh, dear Antonio, look at me; do you wish to kill me? Why do you not speak?"

Antonio told her all.

"I knew it!" she cried, with a divine smile, clasping her hands, and raising her large brown eyes. "I knew it! My Eugenio could not be false."

She sat down upon a bench and tried to compose her mind.

The discovery of her father's letters, and now the discovery of that man's treachery, which had robbed her of all her happiness, turned her against the two dead men, and left but one emotion in her mind. The old love came back from exile, and sat once more upon its throne. Eugenio's vision rose before her, noble and true, as he had ever been; and yet more, for he had pardoned the man who had injured him so deeply. He had endured fresh provocations,

fresh wrongs ; he had sat by his death-bed, and had followed him to the grave.

Her face saddened, and she looked back towards the graveyard, and murmured—" May God forgive him all his sins !"

" If my master, who is only a man, could forgive him, God will, I am sure," said Antonio.

" You said just now that your master was an angel, and I think he is one too."

" That is right, signora ; I like to see you smile. It reminds me of the old days."

" Ah," she sighed, " those old days !"

" Perhaps they will come back," he whispered.

Her face flushed. " Where does he live, Antonio ? Is it far ?"

" Yes ; it is a long way. We must go to Pforzheim by the railway, then to Wildbad by the diligence, and then it takes about two hours to walk. Or we can go there in about five hours with a carriage ; that is the quickest way, only it is more expensive."

" We will order a carriage at once. Let us go to the hotel."

" But first, I have to buy the music ; that will not take very long."



Maddalena insisted on buying the music herself; she put into her bosom the list on which the titles had been written. How her heart had fluttered when she recognised the writing! As she was going out of the shop she saw a piece of music in the window, ran back, and pounced upon it.

"What is that, signora?" asked Antonio.

"Only a stornello," said Maddalena, calmly.

"Ah, yes!" said Antonio. "Il Tempo Passato. I know it very well, because the Marchese used to be so fond of it."

"What, fond of this simple little air!" exclaimed Maddalena, in a tone of surprise.

"Yes, signora. For some time after you had parted, he used to be always singing those lines—I forget them now—something about writing and receiving no reply."

"I remember them," she said, and sang in an undertone as they walked along—

"Ti ho scritto molte volte inutilmente
Ma sempre invano aspetto la risposta;
Dimmi perchè ti sono indifferente
Ma scrivi per pietà, cosa ti costà?
Non ti ricordi più, non ti ricordi più
Di quei bei giorni:
Ah, tempo passato perchè non ritorni."

Her voice trembled, and she burst into tears, saying, "I have sung that also, Antonio, many, many times."

There is nothing so astonishing as the rapidity with which the most different emotions can succeed one another. This may be studied at the theatre, where, within the space of a few minutes, a thousand people may be seen roaring with laughter and dissolved in tears. It is the same in life itself.

As the carriage bore her swiftly towards Eugenio, Maddalena felt drunk with joy; chattered gaily to Antonio, whom she made sit by her, and laughed incessantly without apparent cause. Then, on a sudden, the recollection of her father would come over her. Her face would sadden, and she would shed tears, reproaching herself for feeling happy at such a time. Then the clouds having rained, would dissolve before the sun; her tear-drops would sparkle in her smile. She was balanced on a SEE-SAW of sorrow and of joy—but joy prevailed the most.

She asked many questions about Eugenio, and the faithful domestic told her many lies. How had he

discovered the plot? Julie had confessed. How was it that he had become so poor? He had lent money to a false friend. Did he ever speak of her now? Yes; her name was always on his lips.

They had now arrived at the outskirts of the Black Forest. The road became one long hill. It was skirted with tufts of purple heather, and with green ferns waving in the wind, and with harebells of a delicate and tender blue. They rattled over wooden bridges which spanned silver streams, brawling, bubbling, flinging spray into the sunshine, and falling into miniature cascades. They passed by green meadows encircled by oaken groves, bristling with bulrushes and speckled with blue and yellow flowers; and by orchards which, covered with blossoms, had become gardens; and by little villages with tiny fields of corn and maize, with bright faces which smiled at her from windows and nodded to her as she went by. All nature seemed to welcome her. She leant back in the carriage, and closing her eyes, yielded herself up to voluptuous and dreamy thoughts. She was almost half asleep when she was awakened by the cold damp air. She looked around her. They were in the heart of the forest, and were

toiling slowly up a steep and rugged road. On all sides stood the pines with their red trunks, stretching over her their crooked branches, from which the grey moss hung down in long festoons. The wind moaned dismally among the leaves. The sun was hidden ; a sombre and unnatural twilight was around. Sometimes they emerged into a clearing, where the trees lay stripped of their bark, like naked giants on the ground, and where briars clambered over grey and uncouth rocks. Not a house, not a human being could be seen.

“ Oh, Antonio,” she said, shuddering, “ what can make him live in so horrible a place ? ”

Antonio gave her a disquieted look, and cleared his throat.


“ Signora,” he said.

“ Yes, Antonio.”

“ You must not mind if you find the Marchese a little—a little strange, you know.”

“ How do you mean strange, Antonio ? ”

“ Well, when we lived at Lichtenthal, after your father’s death, he saw nobody at all but me ; of course he did not talk much with me, and that made him feel—feel——”



“Feel dull,” suggested Maddalena.

“No, signora ; just the contrary of that. He was altogether taken up in his work ; he used to live quite in himself ; he drank a great deal of strong tea, and that made him so nervous, that at the least noise he would start and tremble all over. At last he got so, that he could not bear to see a man. If he was out walking and saw any one coming, he would get out of his way—for, you see, he would be composing then, just the same as if he was in his room. He said people annoyed him talking so loud, and not letting him go by without saying ‘Gute tag.’ At last, one day early this spring, he declared that he could not stand it any longer ; that there were too many people at Lichtenthal ; that he might as well be living on the Boulevards. So he came up here to the very top of the mountain, and took a woodcutter’s cottage. I furnished it for him as well as I could, but all he troubled himself about was his piano.”

“He is still composing his opera ?”

“Yes, signora ; and it is beautiful to hear. When he sits down to play, I sometimes think I am in fairy-land ; and once I let the dinner spoil. But much he cares for that ! He *lives* in fairy-land, I

think. If he is writing, and I tell him dinner is ready, he nods his head. Then I wait ten minutes, go again and tell him, and he says, 'Yes, yes; I am coming.' But he does not come for two hours, perhaps, or more. So now I tell you what I do. I take him in some soup, and put it down beside him; then I watch him. Presently he will stop writing to get an idea, looks at the soup, drinks a little, and writes again. In that way I have known him drink two or three platesful, and if I say to him afterwards—'Did the Signor Marchese like the soup?' he says, 'What soup do you mean? I have had no soup to-day.'" Antonio chuckled greatly over these reminiscences. Maddalena looked very grave.

They had now arrived on the summit of the mountain, and Antonio stopped the carriage before a little footpath which ran sinuously into the forest. When he pointed out to Maddalena the roof of the cottage between the trees, her heart beat so violently that she was obliged to stand still.

"Courage, signora," said Antonio, in a faint voice.

The cottage was a mere hovel, being built entirely of logs, and in the rudest manner. They were

obliged to stoop their heads as they went in at the door, which had been left ajar.

"He has gone out," whispered Antonio. Maddalena felt disappointed, and yet relieved.

A room on the ground floor had been simply but comfortably furnished. It was almost filled by a grand piano, on which were scattered several sheets of music-paper. This reminded Maddalena of her first visit to the apartments in the Via Larga; but there the resemblance ended. The walls were bare; the floor without carpet, and roughly boarded. A bottle of ink and half-a-dozen books were on the table, and on the sofa a heap of scores and an empty plate and dish.

"Ah," said Antonio, looking at these with satisfaction. "He has taken the dinner I left out for him."

Maddalena went round the room, touching everything. She made Antonio show her his chamber, which was very small, and which contained only a bed, a chair, and a wash-hand stand; then the kitchen, which was also small, and in which a mattress, laid on the floor, and covered with a blanket, showed where Antonio slept.

"Come, signora," he said, "we shall find him on

the tower." And he explained to her that close by was the highest point of the mountains of the Black Forest. On this eminence a wooden tower had been built, for the benefit of tourists from Wildbad. It commanded a view of the Valley of the Rhine, which was celebrated throughout Germany.

Maddalena recognised him standing on the top of the tower when they were a long way off. He was looking at the sky, his arms crossed upon his breast.

As they mounted the steps they could hear him muttering angrily to himself. "He thinks that we are tourists," whispered Antonio.

Maddalena was almost horrified when, issuing on to the little platform, she found herself face to face with Eugenio. He appeared the ghost of his former self. His dress was disordered, his hair was rough and tangled ; he was emaciated and pale. His hands were like wax. His eyes shone with the vivid light which is reflected from sublime ideas. He took her hand in his, and looked at her vacantly, divided between two thoughts.

"Ah, it is you, Maddalena !" he said, at length.
"You are travelling in Germany, I suppose ?"

"I came to see my father's grave, Eugenio," she replied.

"Yes," said he, musingly ; "I heard down there that he had died."

"Oh, Eugenio!" she cried, hiding her head in his breast and bursting into tears, "you were an angel to him. Antonio has told me all."

Lorini cast a ferocious look over her shoulder at Antonio, who hung his head.

"Come," he said, "let us go to my hut. You must hear some of my opera."

"Yes ; Antonio says that it is very beautiful."

"Oh, he cannot tell ! But you—you will be able to advise me. As for that idiot, he does not find fault with anything."

"How can I?" said Antonio, "when it is all perfect."

"Imbecille!" cried Lorini, furiously ; "and I who fling half of what I write away!"

"*Imbecille*," said Maddalena, softly ; "that reminds me of the old days. Dost thou remember how thou didst used to scold Antonio?"

"Ah, the old days at Florence!" said Lorini.
"What precious time I wasted there! What a life

of idleness and frivolity I led! I cannot understand it when I look back upon it now. The circle of empty fools upon whom I frittered myself away, and——”

“And a poor girl called Maddalena.”

“No, no; I don’t say that. Had it not been for you I should have lived and died a Florentine writing romanze for the salon. I used to despise ambition then—wretched fool that I was—but now, Maddalena, all is changed. I shall become a great man. Sometimes I believe that I shall become the greatest composer that has ever lived. Other men have their styles, but I shall unite all styles within me. Other operas are mere chapters in music, but mine shall be a book, harmonious and complete. *Il Barbiere* is a genteel comedy in music: *Fidelio* is a stage symphony: *La Sonnambula* is an idyll: *I Puritani* is an elegy: *Norma* is a hymn. Within this little opera of mine, which shall be but the prelude to greater works, will be found something of all these. Here we are—I will begin at once. You recollect the libretto, do you not? I read it to you at Florence. Now listen. The first scene is the *corta bandita*. A soldier advances and

sings of war, a poet of art, a wandering troubadour of love. The jester sings a verse after each, and ridicules each in turn. This is the air—school of Rossini——Why, Maddalena, you are crying?”

“I was thinking of my father,” she replied, sobbing.

“Oh, I beg your pardon,” said Lorini, who believed her; “I ought to have had more consideration for you, and not have troubled you with my poor opera at such a time. Can I be of use to you in any way? Are you here alone?”

“I am alone in the world, Eugenio,” she said. “My father is dead, my husband is dead. But we will not talk of that now. Forgive my rudeness in not listening to you.” And going beside him, she soothed his wounded vanity, and made him sit down to the piano again. Then he was soon in the clouds, and passed an hour in playing his favourite passages and airs.

“Fool that I am!” he cried, suddenly; “and I have not made you sing. Come, the duet. I will play the air again—now!”

Maddalena sang those words of love with a heart which rose more than once to her throat.

"Your voice is no longer the same," said Eugenio, coldly. "It is feeble, and full of faults. You have neglected it, I suppose?"

"The signora must be weak from hunger," said Antonio, coming in at that moment. "She has taken nothing since this morning."

"Nor since yesterday," she replied, smiling faintly. "Give me some dinner," she said, looking sadly at Eugenio, "and then, perhaps, my voice may please you better."

"Go to the Jagdhaus and order some dinner, Antonio."

"I did that long ago," he answered, bringing in some fawn cutlets and a bottle of Assmannshäuser. "Now, signora, please to sit down and eat."

After dinner she sang the air again. Lorini this time was transported. He wound his arm round her waist, and kissed her several times. This made her happy for the day: she did not know that these kisses came from the artist, not the lover.

"In a short time," he said, "you will be perfect; you must come every day, and——" Then he

stopped. "But where are you to sleep? You will have to go to Wildbad, I fear."

"Oh, let me sleep here!" said Maddalena, taking his listless hand. "Antonio can make me a bed upon the sofa. I shall be so happy if I am near to thee."

"My dear girl, you cannot do that; you would not be comfortable—you would turn the room upside down. Besides, it would be an outrage on *les convenances*."

"Oh, Eugenio, *les convenances* in the Black Forest!"

"It is not so secluded as you think. The place is infested by tourists—one never has a moment's peace. But—here, Antonio!—where is the signora to sleep? At Wildbad, eh?"

"At Wildbad there is an excellent hotel, and the signora could come up in a carriage whenever she pleased."

"How far is it, Antonio?"

"About eight miles, signora."

"Eight miles?—Oh, no! What is this Jagdhaus where the dinner came from?"

"It is a kind of shooting-box, signora, with a

restaurant attached to it for the benefit of travellers. Yes, they might give you lodgings there ; but it is a very poor place."

"Not poorer than the house from which Somebody raised me, I am sure," said Maddalena, with a tender look upon Eugenio. But his eyes were fixed, and he was humming something between his teeth.

"There, now he is composing," whispered Antonio; "and you might speak to him a dozen times before he heard you."

Maddalena shook him : he gave a start like a man awoke from sleep. "Good-night!" she said, "I am going."

"Good-night!" he said, vacantly. "You will find that the hotel at Wildbad is very good."

"Yes," she said, laughing; "and I will get up early, and come to breakfast with thee to-morrow."

"No, no; don't come to breakfast, because I must work all the morning. Come in the afternoon, and I shall have some recitative for you to sing."

"But I will not disturb thee, Eugenio. Let me come. What am I to do by myself all the day?"

"Well, if you promise to be very quiet," said


Eugenio, with an expression of magnanimity and resignation.

As she followed Antonio to the Jagdhaus, Madalena mused deeply on this curious scene. How much he had been altered ! How different from the elegant young noble whom she had secretly watched as he drove to the Cascine in his superb phaeton and pair ! How different from the tender and thoughtful lover with whom she had passed that *villeggiatura* —the halcyon period of her life ! Yet she flattered herself that this metamorphosis was merely superficial ; that his manners only, not his mind, had changed, and that in a short time she should find her old Eugenio again.

The life which he now led was this. He rose in the early morning, and having taken a cup of goat's milk and a slice of black bread, would walk in the forest, inhaling inspirations with the first rays of the sun, the perfume of the dewy flowers, and the singing of the birds. He would often pass an hour on the top of the tower, looking down upon the distant valley over a sea of waving pines. He would return, his brain filled with ideas, to write them down,

sometimes trying them on the piano. When he had finished, Antonio would bring him in his breakfast. He would eat heartily, drinking a little red wine, and afterwards a cup of black coffee. He would then lie down upon the sofa : Antonio would give him a porcelain pipe filled with Latakia ; and, as he smoked, he would read a poem. Sometimes he would lay down the book to enjoy a reverie ; sometimes putting aside his pipe, he would sing some passage which struck his fancy to a cadenza which he improvised. In the afternoon he made Maddalena sing ; after which she would seat herself beside him on the sofa, and they would converse. She then had interviews with his mind, and found that it was no less altered than his face.

It was impossible for one so young and impressive to be intimate with Jenoure without taking a slight tinge from the character of that extraordinary man. Maddalena, like all women who are affectionate, romantic, and not particularly clever, could not appreciate wit, and held cynics in aversion. She was shocked when Eugenio declaimed some of those bitter paradoxes which he had learnt from Jenoure, and he turned from her the nobler side of



his mind. He spoke to her little of his inner feelings. He talked to her as a composer to a prima donna—that was all. When the shades of evening began to fall, he would rise from her side, and pace restlessly to and fro. His pale face shining out of the twilight, his eyes glistening like those of some wild animal, would make Maddalena shudder as she looked. Then he would sit down to the piano, and from underneath his hands wild, weird-like, mournful sounds would rise. Sometimes he would become as if possessed, his body would writhe, his long hair would toss from side to side, and he would extort from his instrument chords which resembled the cries of children, the howling of wolves, the roaring of a storm. And sometimes he would draw forth such melodies of pathos, such sweet songs of tone, that she would sit listening as if entranced.

It was during one of these ecstasies that he composed the dirge of the last act. As he played it she saw the tears run down his cheeks, and his hands tremble as they touched the keys.

“Ah, Eugenio, Eugenio!” she said, sobbing; “I have been looking for thy heart, and I have found it *here*.” She kissed him on the brow.

“Do you think that you can sing that?” he said, calmly. “You see at the end of each stanza it rises to a wail—a shriek almost: there is no woman in Europe who can prolong that note except yourself. Come, will you try?”

It was always thus he made haste to escape from love to art: for him she was no longer Maddalena, but Restoni.

Nature loves to dispose her phenomena in groups. Events have their epidemics, and incidents a tendency to cluster—like the stars.

And so in this inartistic but true history, all who could have opposed the reunion of our lovers were suddenly removed. The Baroness and Julie were in Russia; Atkins and Restoni in the grave. Eugenio and Maddalena met to live together and—to remain separated by an abyss.

Eugenio was wrapped in his sublime self. He had nothing left with which to love. He might caress her still, but it was with a cold and careless hand; he might speak to her fond words, but the tender, trembling tone was no longer there; she was with him always, and yet she was not with him; it

was Eugenio, and yet it was not Eugenio; she asked for a heart, and she found a brain.

What could she do? How could she struggle against such a rival? How outshine an art? How contend with an idea? She determined to wait patiently until this mania, as she regarded it, had passed.

But this poor Maddalena could no longer tempt Eugenio to be unfaithful to his muse. She had never been beautiful, as I have said before; her features were all faulty, if examined one by one; but her eyes had been of great beauty, and gave expression to this face, as sun shining on a barren spot will adorn it with a beauty which is not its own; she had also possessed the indefinable charm of maidenhood, and her form might have served as a model to a sculptor.

But now she had become a woman: she had passed through troubles which had written wrinkles on her face; the light in her eyes was dimmed; she had grown cadaverous and thin.

She had only her heart to offer him, and that was not enough to excite a second love. Men are ashamed to confess even to themselves that their

hearts can change with a woman's face. Eugenio justified himself in not being able to love her, by the plea that she had married another man on purpose to give him pain. But if she had been beautiful, he would have forgiven her for that.

Maddalena had never thought of her looks, except as she thought of her voice, as something to be cultivated for the stage. So one day when he said to her, "Maddalena, you must come out in my opera; you are the only woman who can sing that part," she replied,

"I must try and get back my good looks first—at least the little I ever had. Look!" she said, drawing up her sleeve, "am I not a skeleton? And so sallow too. Dio! what is to be done?"

But as her eyes met Eugenio's, the smile left her lips. She recognised in them the same expression as in those of the woman at the station who had said, "*Heavens, what a fright!*"

He turned away and sat down to the piano. He said nothing, and his look said so much. The poor girl went home to her little chamber in the Jagdhaus, and cried before her looking-glass.


"My God! my God!" she murmured, "what are

men ? Are their hearts only to be entered through their eyes ? Well, then, I must make myself beautiful. I will not starve myself because he starves himself. I will not fret because he is unkind. Perhaps I had better go from him for a little while."

But when she spoke timidly of returning to England for a short time to look after her affairs, he entreated her so earnestly not to leave him, he simulated fondness so well, that she, deceived as women so easily can be when they really love, persuaded herself that after all she had a corner in his heart.

But it was only her voice from which he was so loth to part, and she made that cruel discovery ere long.

One night it rained in torrents. Eugenio observed it, shrugged his shoulders, and drew close to the fire, which had been lighted on the hearth. Maddalena remained an hour over her usual time ; the storm still raged ; she rose to go. He shook hands with her absently, and did not ask her to stay : he did not think of it ; he was composing. She was too proud to ask for it, and went. Antonio was not at home, or he would not have let her leave




the house. He had been caught in the storm, and had sought for shelter in the Jagdhaus. He was horrified when he saw Maddalena come in, her clothes black with rain and clinging close to her skin. "What!" he cried, "could my master have allowed you to go from his roof on such a night?"

"He asked me to stay," said Maddalena.

She caught a *grippe* which deprived her completely of her singing voice. Eugenio now exposed the absolute selfishness of his character: he did not express sympathy for her misfortune; he denounced the ill luck which had robbed his opera of its best voice; he even spoke to her about it in a peevish tone, as if it were an injury which she had done to him.

He no longer made the pretence of caring for her now. He turned from those eyes which, filled with tears, would be furtively fixed on his; he shrank from her caresses; he left her words unanswered; he buried himself more deeply than ever in his work.

Maddalena could scarcely have endured this life much longer. She was no longer a peasant girl, content to exist in his presence; happy if she could look at him, and sometimes hear his voice. This is the *adoration* stage of love, and to which, when



once past, the heart cannot return. Maddalena had enjoyed the rights of equality, and she continued to demand them. Besides, she had been made proud, she had been embittered by misfortune. She became disgusted with this man who would speak of nothing, think of nothing, but himself. She began to reproach him ; he retorted in kind. There are things which in such cases one long hesitates to say, but which, when once said, are frequently repeated. They often disputed now. At the beginning of a love quarrels join ; at the end, they separate ; and these two finally believed that they disliked each other.

For the space of a week Eugenio worked almost incessantly, day and night ; then a reaction set in ; his brain, spent and exhausted, refused to yield ideas. His imagination was impotent and limp. He walked out, but nature no longer inspired him ; he sat down to work, but could not write a note. Tormented by the desire without the power to compose, he wandered restlessly about, or sat for hours involved in gloomy thought.

Maddalena sympathised with him as soon as she saw how wretched he had become.

"What is to be done for thee, dear Eugenio?" she said.

It was a long time since she had used the *tu*; as for him, he always said *voi* to her now.

"My brain wants repose and change of scene," he said.

"Why not go to Florence?" she said. "Your opera is of Florence, and you ought to write it there."

"Excellent!" he cried, starting up. "Yes, I will write my last act there; it is all I have to do. But—" and his face darkened—"it is impossible: I have no money. Here I can live as I choose; but there I am the Marchese dei Lorini."

"Art thou so poor then?"

"I am *throttled*. My villa and estates are sold. I exist on the rents of my palazzo—which do not come to much."

"The villa sold, Eugenio! and why?"

"Because I gambled them away," he said, sternly, "fool and madman that I was."

"Oh, Eugenio!" she cried. Then her eyes gushed with love, and throwing her arms round his neck, she said, "My dearest, why didst thou not tell me

this before ? I am rich now, very rich ; and all that I have is thine."

"Signora !" he said, haughtily. Maddalena turned pale and started back.

"Signora, I am poor, but I have not yet begun to take alms."

"Alms, Eugenio ! alms from me——"


"Yes ; from you least of all would I take them. What is this money which you offer me ? How did you obtain it ? By bargaining yourself away body and soul."

"Oh, Eugenio, how can you be so cruel ! You know that my father forced me to marry."

"What ! you try to shelter your dishonour behind a corpse ! You think that you can deceive me because your father is no more. But you are mistaken. On his death-bed he declared to me that you had married this man against his wish."

"On his death-bed ! Oh, my father, my father !"

"And you dare to offer me the money which you have purchased thus. Listen to me, signora. The woman who marries a man whom she does not love is a——"



"Oh, Eugenio! Eugenio! for God's sake do not say that word."

"She is worse; she sells herself to him not for an hour, but for a life-time. She sells to him not only her body, but her mind. Her existence is one hideous act of shame. Like those poor creatures whom she professes to despise, love is for ever closed against her, or can only be purchased by a crime. If she ceases to be courtesan, it is to become adulteress."

"Oh, Eugenio, have mercy on me! Do you wish to kill me with your tongue? My father—oh, God, that I should have to say it!—my father lied in the mouth of death. He made me take an oath that I would marry the man whom he chose for me. My husband paid him money, and he bade me take him. Oh, Eugenio! Eugenio! what could I do?"

"Break your oath!" he cried, in a voice of thunder.

"Break my oath—an oath sworn before the shrine of the Madonna!"

"And, pray, which is the worse,—to break an oath made in weakness before the shrine of the Madonna, or to make, in cold blood, a false oath before the altar of God? With your hand in that man's hand,

you swore to love, honour, and obey him ! How have you kept that oath ?”

“I broke it, Eugenio,” she sobbed, “for I loved only thee.”

“Oh, what false weak cowards women are ! They commit a crime, and say, whining,—‘ My father forced me to do it ;’ and then they bring the wages of their infamy to those whom they pretend to love.”

Maddalena raised her eyes to his, and said, in a gentle voice :—

“You have said harsh words to me, Eugenio, and you have called me cruel names. In strict justice I deserve it ; but from you I had hoped for a little mercy as well. You should never judge a woman too severely, dear Eugenio. You know not what she has to suffer. I wish you farewell now, and may God ever bless you. Farewell.”

She went out, leaving him too stupefied to speak. He felt uneasy : he repeated to himself the words which he had just used, and burned from head to foot with shame.

“I am a ruffian !” he cried. “How superior she is to me ! Who am I, then, to moralise like that ? Have I been so virtuous ? What have I been but a

gambler—and something worse. My sins have been days and nights of deliberate, regulated vice ; and I have paid for them in shame more deep than any she should feel.”

He seized a pen, and spent an hour in writing to her a confession of his own dishonour, and imploring her humbly to forgive him and return. In thus laying bare his own disgraceful scars, he showed great tact of heart. But he could not see that Maddalena had left him—not because he had abused her, but because he had refused to allow her to assist him ; because he had proved so clearly that he no longer loved her. But as it happened, it mattered nothing what he wrote. He gave the note to Antonio, who ran with it to the Jagdhaus as quickly as he could. But it was too late. He came back, and flung the letter on the table before his master.

“So you have driven her away at last,” said he.

“What do you mean, rascal ?” cried Lorini.

“Why, she’s gone, that’s all. There was a party of tourists at the Jagdhaus. They had room for her and her little trunk, and click ! clack ! they’re half way to Wildbad by this time.”

“Very well,” said Eugenio, mastering his emotion,

"that will do. I expect her back in a few days."

"No, you don't," replied Antonio, calmly.

"Imbecille!" cried Lorini, foaming at the mouth. "Leave the room! Leave the house! Get out of my sight. Let me never see you again."

"No, no," said Antonio, slowly shaking his head; "I shall never leave you, master. You cannot drive your old Antonio away."

He knelt down and kissed Lorini's hands, which began to fondle his grey hairs.

"Oh, master, master!" he whispered, "why did you speak to her like that?"

"You were listening then?" said Lorini, with a scowl.

"Of course I was," said Antonio, with sublime naïveté; "and I was looking too. The door was ajar. Ah, signore, if you could have seen her face with my eyes! But whatever possessed you to trample on her heart like that, I cannot understand. Our dear little Maddalena—she who loves you so much!"

"Do you think she loves me, Antonio?"

"Do I think she loves you! Now I am going to break my promise, but I don't care for that. Do you

know that she used to work like a slave for you? Per Bacco! I had an idle life. She used to cook your dinner and make your bed, and, rain or fine, she would take your pitcher to the well and fill it herself. She would clean the dish and plate which you had been dining from with her own hands; and when you were out walking, she would come in here. She would go about dusting everything. I would watch her, you know, and presently she would kiss the book which you had been reading on the place where your hand had been. When you had finished your tea, she would come out and pretend she was thirsty, that she might drink out of the same cup. I have seen her go and sit in the smoke which came out of your pipe, and smile when it floated in her face—she who hates tobacco for itself. When she has been with me in the kitchen, I have seen her start and blush when she heard you come in; and often her voice used to tremble when she spoke of you. We used to speak of you all day long,” said Antonio, softly; “and we used almost to quarrel who should serve you the most, but I had always to give in. A little while after she had lost her voice she changed a good deal. A woman’s

love is not like a poor servant's. She wants something in return ; and, indeed, that is only right. She gave up attending to you as she used : perhaps she was ashamed of letting me see that she cared for you when you didn't care for her. Ah, master ! how could you believe that scoundrel of a man ? Did you ever know him tell the truth ?”

“How could I disbelieve a man on his death-bed, Antonio ?”

“Bah !” said Antonio, sententiously ; “men generally die as they have lived. He did, anyhow. His last lie was his last word.”

Lorini was silent for a little while, and analysed himself. He was forced to own that Restoni's dying words had been the chief cause of his outburst of rage. His virtue had been discharged from his wounded vanity. He gave a sort of shudder. Our characters, like our shadows, expand and contract before our eyes. Sometimes we appear giants to ourselves, and sometimes dwarfs. Lorini appeared very small to himself just then.

“Antonio,” he said, “I am sick of this place. We must go to Florence. You will like that, Old Faithful—eh ?”

CHAPTER VI.

ON arriving at Florence, Eugenio domiciled himself for a short time in the town, but could afford to pay only for such wretched lodgings, that he told Antonio to take a cottage somewhere in the suburbs. Would San Miniato suit him? asked Antonio. He had seen an excellent little cottage there. Yes; San Miniato would do very well. So one day Antonio bowed him into the cottage which had formerly been Restoni's. Maddalena had often pointed it out to Eugenio, who upbraided his servant for having chosen it. But the latter declared that it was a mere coincidence; he had known nothing of the Restoni having lived there. The first quarter's rent had been paid; their furniture was all arranged. To the great joy of Antonio (who had his reasons) the Marchese consented to remain.

In returning as an artist to his native city

Eugenio looked at everything with new eyes. Formerly Florence had been to him the Cascine, the Piazza Santa Trinita, and a series of salons. Now he spent his days in the Pitti and the Uffizzi palaces, before the divine works of art which they contained; he went to the Boboli gardens, and looked at the sunset on the Apennines, with their green and golden tints, and their clouds piled on one another in fantastic forms; at night he wandered round the Palazzo Vecchio, its turrets silvered by the moon, and its base blackened by its own shade. Thus his mind was filled with lovely images; ideas came back to him; his brain regained its powers, and ere the summer was over his opera was completed.

Just then Vivaldi returned to Florence; in the first café which he entered he heard the news; that the Marchese dei Lorini, having run through his fortune, and having sold everything except the family palazzo, had returned to Florence; that he lived in a wretched hovel near the church of San Miniato, attended by an old servant; that he was composing an opera seria; and that he might be seen every day, miserably dressed, walking along the

Lung' Arno, with his eyes fixed on the water, humming something inarticulately between his teeth, and carefully shunning his former friends.

When Vivaldi went up to the cottage, Lorini embraced him warmly, called him his saviour, and declared that he had never been so happy in his life. He showed the poet his own libretto, dog-eared, stained, and torn. "Ah!" he cried, "for how much I have to thank this book, every word of which I know by heart. It dragged me out of an abyss; it awoke my slumbering, slothful mind. But listen, Vivaldi, and tell me if my tones are as harmonious as thy words."

He played the whole opera, Vivaldi interrupting him from time to time with critical remarks.

"Well, and now give me your opinion in full," said Lorini, as he rose exhausted from the piano.

"Your opera is very German," said Vivaldi, "too much so, I fear, for us. It is true that in Italy, and especially in Florence, harmony is beginning to be appreciated a little more. But it is only beginning, and this work is decidedly in advance of the age."

"I will make the age follow me, like Orpheus the wild beasts," cried Lorini.

"You may do so in time, caro mio; but you will have a hard battle first. In a country where *Don Giovanni* is not yet admired, the *Daughter of the Donati* will——"

"Fail?"

"No; it will not fail. The duet in the second act, and the dirge and some other airs are Italian melodies, and will be on everybody's lips. But your overture and your grand choruses will not meet with justice here. You have composed them with the theatres of London and Vienna before your eyes; in Florence the orchestra and the chorus are too feeble to execute your ideas."

"Enough of the Italian public; and your own judgment as a connoisseur,—what is it?"

"That your opera is a master-piece."

"Well," said Lorini, "I prefer the refined praise of a few dilettanti to the plaudits of a vile and ignorant mob."

Vivaldi laughed. "You will find those plaudits very agreeable when you receive them, all the same. And now I will leave you to see the impresario. Your opera must come out this winter."

The opera was purchased by the impresario,

chiefly on the authority of Vivaldi, who was celebrated for his profound experience of the public. As soon as it was accepted it was read by the dilettanti di musica, who plagued Lorini to death with their advice.

"These people," he said to Vivaldi, "pretend to judge of my opera without reading the words. It is like judging of a portrait without seeing the original. They come to me and say, 'Such and such a passage is harsh and unmelodious.' I cannot make them understand that the libretto is something more than Victor Hugo modestly defined it to be, *Un canevas d'opéra plus ou moins bien disposé pour que l'œuvre musicale s'y superpose heureusement*.

"No, no, it is more than that, it is a sketch which the composer fills in with colour, light, and shade. These fools complain because I throw in some dull and sombre tints; they want to have it all in pink and gold. And then these pedants of counter-point and thorough bass, who have eyes and ears for nothing but grammatical mistakes! What do I care about their rules? If I have made faults in grammar, so much the worse for their grammar."

But when the parts were distributed, the stage

properties being prepared, and the opera put into rehearsal, Lorini began to suffer those torments which can be realised only by those who have had the misfortune to bring out a work on the stage.

He had spent days at the public libraries in studying the costumes and the buildings of the thirteenth century: out of his slender means he had paid an artist to copy them, and had taken them exultant to the theatre. But the manager declared that he could not afford to buy new costumes and new scenery for a work the success of which was by no means certain.

"Vivaldi, is not this detestable?" he cried. "My Florentines are to wear the costumes of *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and are to walk in the streets of modern Venice."

"Recollect," replied Vivaldi, "that we are not in London. The Pergola is small; the public is limited; the manager is poor. Be reasonable, my friend."

"I will not be reasonable," cried Lorini.

Now the orchestra revolted, declaring that the overture was impossible; the wind instruments were especially indignant, declaring with scorn that they

were not Germans. The manager requested Lorini to re-write the overture ; he refused.

The singers began to make complaints, and in fact they were utterly unable to sing their parts.

Italy, which produces the finest voices, possesses the poorest opera in the world. It is a preparing school for the world beyond the Alps, and its companies are formed of voices which are either unripened or used up.

The tenor was decayed ; the minor parts were badly filled ; the chorus was impotent ; the orchestra mutinous ; the scenery and costumes second-hand. For all these vexations, Lorini was soothed by the promise of a prima donna. She had already sung *stupendamente* at Milan ; she at least would do him justice.

As soon as she arrived, Lorini attended at the theatre, his expectations raised to the highest pitch. He was introduced to a little narrow-chested girl, not more than seventeen years of age, whose delicate beauty partly explained the furore which she had made among the susceptible Milanese ; she was also a perfect musician, which explained the rest. As for her voice, it was grace-


ful, but so very weak that (as she afterwards herself confessed) her parts had always to be adjusted for her. As soon as she read the dirge, she exclaimed that it was quite beyond her powers, and that it could only be sung by an exceptional voice, which was true. Lorini left the theatre muttering imprecations, and the impresario had an interview with him that same day.

Il maestro Lorini had preserved all the pride, though he had lost the polish of the fashionable young Marchese. Unhappily he had also lost his prestige. The manager now adopted towards him a manner and a tone very different from that which from habit and from empty courtesy he had previously used.

"Maestro," he said, "you see that my company can neither sing nor play your partition. You will have the kindness to make the necessary alterations."

"I mutilate my opera!" cried Lorini, savagely. "Never! If these people cannot sing it, get others."

"My dear Eugenio," said Vivaldi, who was present, "your work will be indifferently produced ;



there can be no doubt of that. But outside Florence the opera remains your property; have the courage to look on this merely as a rehearsal."

"It is a kind of rehearsal which is too public, amico mio. If they make me render my opera ridiculous, how will it ever get a footing on another stage?"

"You refuse then to make these alterations?"

"Unequivocally."

"Very good," said the manager, rising. "I thought it only right to give you the opportunity. But as they must be made, I shall put the business into the hands of some worthy man who——"

"You dare not! You cannot! It is my opera!" cried Lorini.

"Pardon me, it is mine," replied the manager, with a low bow; "I have bought it from you, and paid the money."

Lorini, livid with rage, strode three or four times up and down the room. Then calming himself, he turned to the man and said,

"Well, if it must be done, I would prefer to do it myself."

"Nobody could do it so well," said the manager politely, and handed him the manuscript.

"And it can afterwards be produced in its pure integrity on other boards," said Vivaldi.

Lorini, clutching the manuscript tightly in his hands, went out. In a few hours the impresario received the following note :—

SIGNORE,—I decline to hack down my creation to the level of cheap voices. I have the pleasure to return to you the money which you paid to me for my opera, which I retain. I shall be happy to defray any further expenses incurred by advertisements, &c.

I kiss your hand,

LORINI.

In a few hours the Marchese received the following reply :—

SIGNORE,—I beg to acknowledge with pleasure the receipt of the money which I paid for your creation. I also enclose a copy of the *scrittura*, which you signed, and by which you have now rendered yourself liable to the usual forfeit—thirty thousand francs.

I lie at your Excellency's feet,

* * *

Lorini mortgaged the family palazzo, and the sum was paid. Soon afterwards Vivaldi went to Milan, where a tragedy of his was about to be produced. After remaining there a month, he would return to Florence for a few days, and then start for Paris. It was arranged that he should take the *Daughter of the Donati* with him. Already known in Paris as one of the few original poets whom Italy possessed, he would be able to push it in the right circles. So he went, and Eugenio was left alone.

He had no employment now, except to correct and retouch his opera. But by going over it again and again his mind became blunted; he lost the faculty of judgment; like one who lives constantly with a face, he exaggerated blemishes, and could no longer recognise charms. He began to suffer those agonies of doubt and discouragement which seize at one time or another upon the creators of all untried works; he feared that the music which so many could depreciate, and which only his friend and his servant could praise, must be worthless after all.

"Ah, Jenoure, Jenoure," he cried, "you told me that I should be happy with this new mistress; but

I know not whether I possess her, or whether it is only a phantom which I hold in my arms."

Like a mother weary of carrying her unborn child, he led a disconsolate and restless life—neither occupied, nor yet free—filled with morbid thoughts; sometimes imagining that his offspring was a shapeless monster, or that after making him suffer tortures it would be still-born, and that barren minds would laugh him to scorn.

He was left alone. His solitude was now no longer peopled with the lovely fantasies of thought. It was naked, ghastly, and gigantic; it terrified and crushed him.

And now he felt a yearning for Woman. He was so desolate and so unhappy. He longed to lean his head upon some tender breast, to feel a soft arm round his neck, and words of consolation whispered in his ear. As some strong man shaking off the ties of civilisation and domestic love wanders forth into the desert, exulting in his freedom, so he had created for himself a wilderness in life. As that man struck down by sickness, and lying helpless on the sand, remembers the sweet faces of those at home, so Eugenio, in this day of loneliness and trouble, re-

membered Maddalena. He kissed her name, which he found scratched on a pane of glass; as he lay in the great curtained bed, he thought with a smile that she must have slept there too; he walked in the Cascine, where they had so often roamed together picking the wild tulips on the banks of the Mugnone, playing at hide-and-seek among the bushes, and supping by moonlight beneath those trees, which now were losing all their leaves. When he found his old passion springing up within him, as fresh and tender as if it had known no winter, he was surprised; for we often think that we have killed love, when we have only buried it alive in our hearts.

And often at night, when he sat alone in that wretched room, cowering over the dying ashes, and listening to the autumn winds whistling without, often he would see the shade of Maddalena glide by, casting on him that last look of sorrow and reproach, and fading away when he attempted to clasp her in his arms. Often he would long that her kind face was there to gladden him with her bright smile, and to soothe him with her pensive eyes; and often weeping, he would sing those beautiful verses of Sainte Beuve:—

“ Lorsque la nuit est froide, et que seul dans ma chambre,
Près de mon poêle éteint, j’entends souffler le vent ;
Pensant aux longs baisers qu’en ces nuits de Décembre
Se donnent les époux, mon cœur saigne, et souvent,
Bien souvent, je soupire et je pleure, et j’écoute.”

Nor were his troubles only of a mental kind. It was now winter ; food and fuel was dear ; he had little money left. Antonio had long ago spent all his own savings, without, you may be sure, saying a word to his dear master. Sometimes they had not enough to eat.

Lorini bore these trials nobly ; once only he alluded to them. It was a bitter night ; he had eaten so little that he suffered all the more from the cold. The fire had gone out, and there was no wood in the house.

“ You had better go to bed, master,” said Antonio, crying ; “ you will be warmer there.”

Eugenio let himself be undressed, for Antonio performed his duties as a valet none the less scrupulously because he was also housemaid and cook.

“ Well,” said Eugenio, smiling, “ it seems that I am to be a martyr in the cause of art, and I can bear these little matters well enough. But it is hard for you,

my poor Antonio ; you have not written an opera ; you have done nothing to offend the Fates ; why should you be made to starve with me ?

“ Oh, master,” whispered Antonio, “ I am very happy. It is so pleasant to be with you always, and to do everything for you. It is only for your sake, that I—— ”

“ Tell me, Antonio,” he said, patting him on his withered cheek, “ do you think I did right to take my opera away and pay all that money ? ”

“ To be sure, master,” replied Antonio, arranging the clothes round his neck. “ The wretches, to bring a child to sing your music, with her voice like a penny whistle ! But when we come out in Paris, they will be punished enough.”

“ Ay, *when*,” said Lorini, sighing.

At this moment there was a tap at the door, and an old man came stealthily in. It was a Jew who lived on the Ponte Vecchio, and who was the most celebrated usurer in Florence. His black eyes gleamed, as wandering round the room they counted all the signs of poverty and distress ; the fireless grate, the common oil-light, the furniture, which had been reduced to a table and a chair, and the

scanty coverings beneath which shivered the Marchese dei Lorini. One ravenous look was fixed on the splendid piano, which alone distinguished this room from that of the humblest contadino.

"What do you want?" said Lorini. "The quarter's interest for the mortgage money is not yet due."

"I would wish to speak with the Signor Marchese on a matter which may prove to be of advantage to him."

"You can speak," said Lorini. Antonio, having offered the usurer the solitary chair, had already left the room.

"The Signor Marchese is at present under slight——"

"No preambles, if you please. You have a proposal to make, I presume: make it then."

"The Signor Marchese wishes to have his opera brought out with an efficient company, with scenery and costumes of the period, with a powerful orchestra; in fact, he wishes to have it fairly placed before the public."

"Such is certainly my wish."

The usurer advanced his chair a little closer to the bed.

‘ Now supposing that the Signor Marchese, instead of submitting himself to the caprices and ignorance of managers, were to take a theatre himself, and organise his own company.”

“ An excellent idea,” said Lorini, “ but it appears to me, though I am ignorant of business matters, that a large sum of money would be required to carry it out.”

“ A very large sum of money would be required.”

“ Well, I don’t happen to have it at the present moment.”

“ If the Signor Marchese would permit me, I could point out to him how, by a merely nominal sacrifice, a large sum of money might come into his hands.”

“ How ? ”

“ The Signor Marchese has already sold his villa, his lands, his house and furniture in the Via Larga ; he has also heavily mortgaged the Palazzo Lorini ; he has withdrawn himself from the circles of Tuscan society ; he has no near relatives ; no ties which bind him closely to Florence.”

The Jew paused.

“ Continue,” said Lorini, in an amiable tone.

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*if he would like, then to sell the palazzo : it is
very old and would have to be partly rebuilt, but
still if he would like to sell it——"*

"Antonio!" said Lorini.

Antonio made his appearance. A lean arm protruded from the bed, and pointed to the door, which *Antonio* opened.

The Jew, stubborn and persistent, like all his tribe, began to remonstrate.

"Go," said Lorini, in a deep voice. *Antonio* seized him by the collar, and pulled him towards the door.

"You will think better of it," said the unanswerable Hebrew.

Antonio pushed the man out.

But in a few moments he opened the door ajar, and said :

"If you ever want to sell the piano, let me have the first offer, you know."

Antonio ran after him into the road, crying :
"Sell our piano, you dog of a Jew ! why should we want to sell our piano ? If you come here again, I will cudgel you all the way down the hill to Florence."

"Empty stomachs make clattering tongues," said the usurer, with a grin, which showed two rows of white teeth, glistening like those of a wolf.

Antonio disdaining reply, returned to the cottage: he looked at his master, who had his eyes closed: loitered about for a moment, then went into the kitchen, taking the oil-light with him.

Some days after this Antonio asked his master if he would not like to see the flood.

"What is the flood?" said Lorini.

"Why I have told you half a dozen times, only you always forget," said Antonio, peevishly. "The Arno's flooded; and the jewellers on the Ponte Vecchio have taken away their things; and all the cellar windows of the Lung' Arno have been bricked up; and it is a fine sight, the river, they say; and people are dying by dozens from the miliare fever because of the water in the streets."

"Well, we will go and see it, Antonio," said his master, benignantly, and they went down into Florence."

Tearing down from the Apennine gorges,—sweeping trees, stones, crops, cottages, into its savage

course,—rolling along muddy waves, great and furious as those of the sea,—flinging brown spray into the air,—emitting a rank, earthy smell, the Arno could scarcely be recognised as the torpid stream of a week before.

It was an interval between the storms which had been raging almost incessantly for some days past. A crowd of people had collected by the river side; men with yellow torches passed to and fro; above, the moon flung a tawny light upon the clouds as they sailed swiftly past.

Lorini leant over the bridge, and gazed with delight at the dark waters which thundered loudly under the arches below: sometimes a black and shapeless mass, the trunk of an uprooted tree, or a fragment of the railway works which had been destroyed, would dash against the stalwart stones with a crash heard loud above the river roar. As the bridge vibrated, Antonio would cry with fright, and Lorini would laugh.

“Oh, come away, master,” he said. “See, we are alone here. It is not safe. Do you wish to kill your poor Antonio?”

“Come then,” said Lorini, and crossing the bridge

he waded along the Lung' Arno till he came in front of an old palazzo. He stood there for some time, looking at those stern and massive walls, of which the stones seem to have been piled together by giant hands.

"Antonio," he said, "we are starving, and I have no heir. I am the last of the Lorini. If I die, this house will go to people who have palaces of their own. If I sell it, we shall be rich. What say you, Antonio?"

Antonio made no reply.

"It is hard to feel hunger and to wear rags. It is harder still for me to be without that money which would help me up to fame. What is the use of a title when one is a beggar? What is the use of a palace in which one cannot live? It is mere mockery, Antonio. It is the sword without the sheath."

Antonio made no reply.

"Even in aristocratic England old families die out every day. There it is different from here. They sell their town-house first. Their villa and lands go last. But we are citizens, Antonio: we cling to our old houses in the city while we can."

Antonio made no reply.

"Yes, we cling to them," murmured Eugenio, "we cling to them while we can. That old palace was built by Michael Angelo himself. The Lorini have fought it well ere now. From that gate six gonfalonieri have gone forth. Those arms carved in stone have been looked up to during centuries with eyes of love and hatred, but never of contempt. The Lorini have been always held in honour. Our men have been without fear, and our women without reproach. Their portraits are inside, Antonio. I have often wanted to go and look at them—especially since that old Jew came—but the Marchese dei Lorini cannot knock at his own door in rags. There have been times when I wanted courage, and I knew that those grand faces of the past would give it me. But now that is over: the temptation is past. Old house, I will be as strong and stern as thee. I will not sell thee, for thou art not mine. Thou hast been won by a thousand brave strokes of the sword; thou shalt not be lost by one dastard stroke of the pen. Thou art not mine; thou art the house of the Lorini; to sell thee would be a shame, a sacrilege, a THEFT!"

"Oh! my master," cried Antonio, kissing his hand, "you are the last and the best of the Lorini."

"And you, my poor Antonio, will you then be so mad as to stay with me still? We are on a weak bridge, my Antonio, and there is a fierce river underneath."

Antonio lifted up his aged head.

"Master," he said, "I have also my family pride in a humble way. My father and my forefathers have served the Lorini almost as long as there have been Lorini. So my father told me: so his told him. We have served them faithfully; we have bled for them; we have died for them. There has never been a coward amongst us yet; and there shan't be while I live."

Lorini smiled upon him. These smiles were Antonio's wages.

Then Lorini bared his head, and said, "If the ghosts of my ancestors still hover round these walls, I pray them to support me in my hour of need."

Antonio looked at his master. His eyes shone strangely and his cheeks were flushed.

"Master," he whispered, "let us go home."

"No," said Lorini, "I feel inspirations coming on

me. Leave me now. I will be at the cottage in an hour's time."

"But do not stay long, master; the miliare is with us now, and it is dangerous to be by the river-side."

Lorini plunged into dark and silent streets, and walked without rest for several hours, his imagination inflamed by the swelled and swarthy river, by the memory of his ancestors, and by the first flame-touch of the miliare.

There are some streets of Florence in which at night one might imagine oneself in the middle ages. They are narrow and rudely paved: their houses are ancient and grotesque. Not a light is seen; not a sound is heard. All is dark and silent. One is alone with the dead.

As Eugenio stood in such a street he transported himself into the past. There came lights to all the windows: he heard voices all round him; then the doors opened and grave burghers came forth, and meek-eyed maidens staidly dressed in robes of woollen cloth; and cowed friars passed by, and buffoons in parti-coloured garments, and minstrels

tinkling their lutes, and noble knights mounted on prancing steeds.

Yet all the while he was conscious that these were but visions ; that as he stood there his eyes were closed. He tried to open them, but the lids were like balls of lead. He gave a laugh, like a drunken man who tries to sober himself, and cried, in a loud voice, "My name is Eugenio dei Lorini, and I live in the nineteenth century."

He saw the sky all reddened by the glow of flames. He heard the clash of steel, and he saw two bodies of men in black armour pass by him, struggling fiercely together, and crying, "A Guelph ! A Ghibelline !"

"Costumes of the period, *maledetto impresario!*" cried Lorini, whose reason was rapidly forsaking him.

At the same time he felt, as it were, a huge icy hand being passed slowly over his limbs. But his brain blazed as if it was on fire, and something inside his head went up and down in loud and measured throbs.

Then he heard a loud and dolorous voice. A gloomy procession came in view. Men robed in white ; the black banner of death ; a bier, in which sat the

daughter of the Donati, her lover's head lying in her lap. She was singing the funereal dirge. He recognised the voice and form of Maddalena. As it passed by, he peered over at the corpse, and he saw it was himself.

"MADDALENA!" he shrieked, and fell senseless to the ground.

A short while afterwards a light appeared in the distance, and the rumbling of a carriage was heard. The horse stopped and shied at the body in the road. The driver got down.

"What is the matter?" cried a querulous voice from within the carriage.

"It is a man lying here. He is dead, I think," said the coachman.

"Let me see," said a woman's voice, and the Signora Pinsuti sprang out, unhooked the carriage lamp, and held it over the pale and distorted face.

"It is Lorini," she cried. "Quick! put him in the carriage."

"No, no; I won't allow it," cried the voice of the Signor Pinsuti, a miserable being whom we have avoided mentioning before: "it is the miliare, and we shall catch it from him."

“Get out and walk home then, wretch,” cried his wife, who was at least a woman. “Place him on the seat, Giovanni—he still breathes—and drive to the hospital as fast as you can.”

CHAPTER VII.

ONE morning, as Dr. Darlington was receiving his patients, a lady, fashionably dressed, was ushered into his room. She raised her veil.

“What ! Maddalena !” he cried, starting back.

“Yes,” she said, with a stage laugh ; “you hardly knew me at first, did you ? I am a blonde now. I come from the hands of Madame Deborah, the restorer of female beauty. She has enamelled my face, you see ; and blackened my eyelids ; and gold-dusted my hair. For the future I intend to enjoy myself. I would go back to the theatre, but, unhappily, I have lost my voice—and my illusions. But I shall make myself a patroness of art ; I shall take a *petite maison* : I shall encircle myself with all the talent of London. I am not handsome, but I am rich ; so I am sure to have plenty of admirers. Men are always money-worshippers, and if a woman

dresses well, and wears good jewellery, and receives in elegant apartments, they will be sure to think that she is beautiful, at least so Madame Deborah says. Yes, that is the kind of life I am going to lead; I crave excitement. I have never tasted pleasure, and I want to know what it is. I am tired of being good. How do you like me in this dress, Charles? It came from Elise. She made just such a one for the Baroness Sackowsky; now that I have become a blonde, I can take her for a model. Why do you look at me in that strange way? Oh, yes, I mean to be very happy now. I shall stay in London till the season is over; then I shall go to Baden-Baden; then I shall go to Paris. Madame Deborah says there is a world in the great world there, where the celebrated Restoni can easily enter, since she is free and rich. Ah! well, I have been celebrated, and now I must be content to become notorious, I suppose. Charles, Charles, do not look at me with such sorrowful eyes. It is not my fault. Have not I gone through enough? I will not always pine and suffer, and sacrifice myself. I have always tried to be good, and I have always been punished for it. I was a good daughter, and my father sold

me. I tried to be a good wife, and they persecuted me almost to death. I have been religious—I have been true to *him*, and, oh my God! he has driven me out of his house, and sent me back into the world with nothing left to live for. My last hope is gone. I despair. Oh! how can men be so cruel! I wish that I did not care for him, but I love him still; I want to forget him, and I only know one way.”

“I can tell you another and a better way,” said Darlington, taking her hands in his. “You have been shattered by a storm, and you wish to sail out into a hurricane. Come, my child, listen to me for a little while. I will take you into a haven where your sweet heart may be at rest.”

“No, no,” she said, shaking her head, “it will never be at rest again.”

“Try me at least,” he said, “and you will see.”

“No, Charles, I do not deceive myself. I shall not forget him in the life I am going to lead nor in any other. I shall not forget him till I die, and then perhaps I may find God more merciful. I want to die soon, and in this life I shall not linger long. I am very weak; I have never been accustomed to

the excitements of dissipation and late hours. Yes, yes, I know what you would say. I am about to become a drunkard, as my father was, only my stimulants will be of a less vulgar kind. I hope that they will kill me as soon. This is a suicide. I know it is. I know that I am guilty, and that perhaps I may never be forgiven; but I cannot help it. I suppose that my father's sins are in my blood. I have struggled long and hard against them; but they have proved too strong for me at last."

She covered her face with her hands, and rocked herself to and fro. Darlington spoke to her for a long time; she did not hear what he said; but his voice soothed her, as a child is appeased by its mother's tender words while yet unable to understand their sense.

* * * *

There is a convent at Chelsea into which Catholic ladies sometimes enter, to seclude themselves for a short time in solitude and silence from the noisy world, to do penance for past sins, and to prepare themselves for a future life.

The discipline of this convent is exceedingly severe. Its inmates rise at six; the whole day is spent at

the confessional, in attending divine service, in taking the blessed sacrament, in reading devotional works, and in solitary meditation. One hour only is given to them for meals, and one for recreation, when they meet to converse on matters relating to religion.

Here Maddalena passed a week. The first day she was three hours on her knees at the ear of the confessional. She was compelled to confess the sins of her whole life, which were almost entirely comprised within the months of her married life and of her widowhood. When she revealed the detestable thoughts which she had sometimes had, most of which have not been exposed in this history, for they were known only to herself and to God ; when she heard her own voice saying these things aloud, she recognised for the first time the full extent of her sin ; she felt for the first time shame and remorse to the full. This is the chief use of confession : the utterance of evil thought is a penance in itself, and is the first step towards true repentance. I admit that it would be the same if it were uttered in the air, cast upon the Infinite to travel up to God. But as the Church erected temples, and appointed set days and hours for men to meet together and pray,

so she has appointed set times and places for confession, which is the highest kind of prayer.

And because the minds of men, fatigued with the distance between them and God, are apt to fall back wholly upon earthly things, the Church has placed images and paintings before their eyes, not as idols, but as mediums, as memories, as ladders for their tottering, turning thoughts; so also she has appointed priests, isolated from the passions, devoted exclusively to the service of Heaven, to receive the outpourings of Christian hearts; who, by imposing upon them wholesome punishments, may warn them of the wrath of God; who, by absolving them from their sins, may remind them of His mercy. For that which man can pardon, He surely will not punish. Man is always more cruel than God.

Oh, beautiful ordinance, which even Rousseau and Voltaire could praise! It was a noble thought which made thee a sacrament of our Church. It has been stained, like all sacred things, by the crimes, and yet more by the calumnies of men. But still there are many souls who can say, as this poor girl once said: "When I was on my knees at the confessional, I felt a load lifted off my heart; I saw my sorrows

go from me like a storm ; and I felt something pass into me, as it were, from God ! ”

* * * *

“ Well, Maddalena ? ” said Darlington, as he assisted her into his carriage at the convent gate.

“ You have saved me, my friend,” she said, fixing upon him her swimming eyes. “ Ah, how could I ever have—— ”

“ Hush, my dear,” he said ; “ we will not speak any more of that. Let us talk about the future. What do you wish to do ? ”

“ I will be guided entirely by you, dear Charles. Give me your advice. I have formed no plan yet ; only I think that I should like to retire altogether from the world to some holy house. Have you ever been to the Sanctuary of Vallombrosa ? I should like to find a resting-place like that, which lays in the green bosom of Nature, far removed from the strife and sounds of this wretched world. No ? You shake your head. What, then, do you counsel me to do ? ”

“ I advised you, Maddalena, to go to this convent for a few days. Your mind required discipline and repose. But I do not wish to see you become an

ascetic and a recluse. This peace and solitude of a week you have found an anodyne; but continued too long, it would become an evil drug. It would make you stagnate in cloistered selfishness; committing nothing, but omitting much; leading a sinless, but a useless life; making an idol of your own soul, as Lorini has made an idol of his own mind. No, no, Maddalena, it is nobler far to remain in the stormy stream of life; to share and sometimes to soften the struggles of our fellow-creatures; to endure trials and to resist temptations. *Qui laborat orat*, Maddalena,—work is prayer. But seclusion is suicide, and solitude is self.”

“Do you think, then, that I can do good?”

“Look out into the streets, my dear; do you see none there to whom you could do good?”

“Ah, yes, too many. When I first came to London I was shocked, as all foreigners are, by the horrors of your streets. And at first I put money into the hands of every starving wretch I met, but I soon gave it up in despair.”

“Yes, the misery of London is so vast that it would engulf the riches of all the Rothschilds like a rain-drop in the sea. Our poor-laws suck in huge

revenues ; our hospitals are ‘supported by voluntary contributions;’ we have charities of almost every kind, which the ingenuity and benevolence of man could suggest ; and yet men die of frost and famine at our doors.”

“Oh, it is frightful !” she sighed.

“But,” he cried, with energy, “do I cease to heal sickness because I cannot eradicate disease from the world? Will you shrink from before this monster because you cannot kill it with your own hand? Maddalena, in this city there is an army of patient and laborious hearts, who work only to succour the poor and the distressed. Their means are small ; their efforts are silent and are scarcely seen ; but they work on. Will you join us, Maddalena ?”

The great women-singers have been celebrated almost without exception for their generosity. How many anecdotes are told of the charity of Catalani, Malibran, and Jenny Lind ! But in the new life which Maddalena now embraced, she devoted her mind as well as her money. She toiled from morning to night, visiting the poor and sick in their own homes, nourishing their bodies and their hearts.

Charity is not only donation, but discrimination ; immense as Maddalena's wealth was, she was forced to husband it with care ; her heart was fortunately guided by the doctor's head, and he thought it best to warn her against the counterfeit misery which passes current in the streets. The professional beggars had at first found a mine in Maddalena ; they had placed her name in their books, and a mark indicating *charity* upon her door-post. But Darlington observed this as he came to visit her one day ; he laid in wait ; presently a man artistically crippled limped up to the door ; the doctor warned him off in the *patter*, or secret language of thieves and cadgers, and chalked a hieroglyphic denoting *danger* on the door-post.

Maddalena became so happy that she recovered her health and her good looks. Her voice was restored to her during a violent cold which she had caught—nature apparently turning homœopathist. She sang sometimes at concerts for benefits, and on behalf of charitable funds, but felt no desire to return upon the stage. All ambition had died within her, except that of doing good. Philanthropy was now her art ; and an art it really is with its terrible toils,

its constant novelties, its bitter disappointments, its moments of transport, ethereal and sublime. She performed two actions only which had reference to her past life. Hearing that Miss Atkins was living in a state of indigence, she conferred a handsome annuity upon her. Miss Atkins sent her a letter of slimy adulation ; told her friends that the Jesuit who had forged her brother's will expected to compound with Heaven for her sins for five hundred a-year, and married her butler. He shortly afterwards had a "call," and they speculated in a chapel. The "call" did not answer ; the tabernacle went to smash ; and the worthy pair now keep a public-house in the neighbourhood of the Edgeware Road.

She also directed her solicitor to purchase, if possible, and at any terms, the villa Lorini and the lands thereunto attaining. She determined to leave them to Eugenio. "He will not refuse them when I am dead," she thought.

The solicitor discovered that the property had been purchased by one Maynard Jenoure, of the Travellers' Club, Esq. ; and shortly afterwards Darlington received this letter, dated from St. Petersburg :—

"MY DEAR CHARLES,—Your letters have all come to hand, and I have been much amused in reading the adventures of our friends, and still more your 'treatment' of the little Restoni.

"I have been told by doctors that *bread pills* are sometimes a most powerful therapeutic remedy, being conferred with active agencies by the imaginations of the recipient. Thus, in one case being administered as a cathartic, they have had the required effect, after salts, castor-oil, and other aperients had failed. Given as a tonic, they have been known to brace the system, create a cheerful appetite, and restore health to the system, and under the name of mercury they have even produced salivation and spongy gums.

"It seems to me, my dear friend, that you have been physicking Restoni with religion in pretty much the same way. You do not believe in Catholicism any more than you believe in the Brahmins, the Buddhists, or the ancient Druids ; you know that creeds are all *bread pills*, neutral bodies, which simply serve as a fulcrum, by means of which the imagination works on the mind ; you know that the physicians of the mind, like those of the body, must

stoop to a little artifice sometimes. You have done so, and you have succeeded. Receive my congratulations.

"Apropos of that young lady, I have just had a letter from my lawyer, who tells me that she wants to buy the Lorini estate. I suppose that I must consent. It is very clear that she means to marry that youth, and (mark my words) she will. I have always said this :—If a man determines to possess a woman, or if a woman determines to marry a man, give them time and opportunities and they must succeed. I look upon it as a certainty that Maddalena will marry my poor young friend. May she be happy ! I do not think she will.

"There are two natures in Lorini's mind ; and his future life, like his past life, will be a SEE-SAW from one to the other. He is a man of society, and he is an artist.

"If he marries this girl, he will become rich ; naturally slothful, he will feel disinclined to work ; if his opera should be successful, he will say that he does not wish to risk his reputation ; or if it fails, he will be discouraged, and say that he has mistaken his vocation. He will go to Paris ; there his talents, or

rather his genius—for a genius I believe he is—will make him the rage. He will enter a world of which the crowds in London and his paltry coterie in Florence will have given him no idea. He will be courted by the wittiest and most elegant women in the world. What will become of his wife, who has neither breeding, beauty, nor brains? My dear Darlington, he will spend her money, and burn her to death over the slow fire of neglect.

“Supposing that he resists these temptations, and remains composer? Worse and worse. The woman who marries an artist is a fool. Let her read his books, look at his pictures, listen to his music—but live with him! Why, it is like attempting to enjoy a spectacle by going behind the scenes.

“The artist has not only his hours of long manual work like ordinary men: always subject to the despotism of his ideas, he indulges in vagaries of action, and in irregularities of life, with which his wife will attempt to combat, but in vain. Then how can an ordinary mind comprehend those deep abstractions of thought in which the artist is so often buried, and in which an affectionate word is a disturbance, and a caress an interruption. His wife

explains these by supposing that she has offended him, or that he is thinking of another woman.

“The wife of a genius must be content to lie at her husband’s feet, to watch his eyes, to smile when he gives her a glance, to lick his hands furtively, and to embrace him when he can spare the time. We hear very often of women who can do this, but I have never met one yet.

“In marriage there are *mésalliances* of mind, my friend, as there are *mésalliances* of rank. Such men as Lorini and myself live upon the mountain-tops; the air is too thin and refined for minds like that of Maddalena. Only eagles can breathe it and live.

“I do not often speak in earnest, but this is a subject upon which I cannot jest. You know that I speak from experience now. You remember the romantic period of my life, do you not? If you wish to save Maddalena from *her* fate, and Lorini from mine, never let them see each other again. If you have still the manuscript which I wrote soon after that unhappy event, give it to Maddalena to read. Yet what would be the use? She loves this Lorini, and she will go back to him, like the moth

to the flame, at which it has already singed its wings.

“As for myself, I am here at St. Petersburg studying *Revenge*. I am occupied, and therefore I am as happy as I can ever hope to be. As in the body the oxygen which is inhaled supports life by consuming the fuel which is offered to it: but if no food is there devours the tissues themselves, and kills: so it is with my unhappy mind. I must work—work—work—feed this monster who cries out for food, or it will turn and rend me of my reason or my life.

“But happily I have raised up for myself a three-fold task, which would exhaust a dozen ordinary lives, and which even I, with my wealth, my energy, and my rapidity of execution, shall never be able to complete.

“You remember I told you that I intended to paint a series of pictures which should portray the *Passions* of man. To these I had afterwards the idea of adding the *Emotions*.

“I have now had a grand conception. I shall paint a work of Fiction. Each picture shall be a chapter: each series of pictures a book. A story

shall run throughout them as in the *Rake's Progress*; but while that is a mere biography, this shall be an elaborate and enormous work. It shall depict all the passions and emotions of the human race; all the phases of society; and all the types of civilised man. You will see at once what great advantages I possess over the novelists of the pen. I shall not be able, it is true, to make my personages speak; but how much better the character of a face or a landscape, a situation or a dénouement, can be described in colours than in words!

"My second task is to travel in those distant countries which are so little known, and of which the vague accounts of travellers only serve to tantalize men of science. I shall carefully select specimens from different tribes of savages, and make portraits of them. I shall do with rare men what Audubon did with rare birds. I shall paint a museum; and thus science, furnished with exact materials on the configuration and complexion of the doubtful races, may be able to arrive at some definite conclusions.

"Thirdly, should I ever live to carry out these two gigantic designs, having by that time read all

the great books, studied all the great languages, travelled everywhere, and seen everything, I shall begin to paint the History of the World.

“MAYNARD JENOURE’

As Darlington was musing on this singular letter, he saw Maddalena’s carriage drive up to the door. They had made an appointment to see each other at that hour, regarding a benevolent scheme which they had in hand. In London there is no hospital for children. Such an institution is required, not only by charity, but by science; it is of importance that medical men should have better opportunities of studying the special maladies of those poor little creatures who sicken and die by hundreds in our noxious courts and alleys.

As soon as she entered, he saw that something extraordinary had occurred. Her face was flushed, and her movements nervous and excited.

“Oh, Charles,” she cried, “he is starving!”

Darlington sighed. “There are many who starve in London every day. Tell me the case.”

“It is *he*!”

“Who?”

"The man who took me out of a peasant's cottage, and who is now forced to live in one—in the same one himself. The man who plucked me from a life of misery—my benefactor, my lover, my Eugenio!"

Darlington sighed again.

"Read this," she said, and gave him a letter written on coarse paper, with faint, brown ink, and abounding in blots and orthographical mistakes.

"MOST EXCELLENT LADY,—I take the liberty to write a letter to you, thinking that you would like to hear some news of Florence, which is your native city. A little while ago the King was here from Turin, and drove in the Cascine every day. There was a grand ball, and also an illumination. A woman was murdered the other night on the steps of the Santa 'Maria Novella. The Madonna in the Duomo has got a new dress, which is very beautiful. There is a flood here now, which has broken down the railway between Florence and Leghorn, and the miliare fever is very bad.

"We are living now in the little cottage at St. Miniato, where you used to live. The opera is finished, but that villain of a manager wanted the

Marchese to mutilate it because he had engaged people who could not sing. So my master took it back ; then they made him pay forfeit ; and he had to sell the rents of the palazzo for the next five years, and we have very little money left ; and the old usurer will not let us have any more. He says that he has got a bad bargain as it is : that my master will not live five years—he who has such strong health. It is true that he is rather pale and thin just now, but then one does not fatten upon chestnut bread. We know what the Jew wants, but a Lorini would rather die of hunger than sell the palazzo of his ancestors.

“ Your most humble and devoted servant,

“ ANTONIO.”

“ You will send him some money, will you not ? ”

“ *Send* him money ! Charles, where is your heart ? ”

“ I have none for such an egotist.”

“ Oh, no, do not call him that.”

“ What do you mean to do ? ”

“ Why, go to him, of course.”

"Then you are going to fall in love with him again."

"Again! no. I have never ceased to love him."

"Not even when he abused you, I suppose," said Darlington, in a tone of irony.

"Ah, Charles, you do not understand a woman. I never loved him so much as I did then. How noble he looked when he drove me from him. And he was right. I, who could marry a man whom I did not love, I was not worthy to live with him."

"This is utter madness," said Darlington, pacing up and down the room. "The man does not care for you."

"If he did, would there be merit in my loving him?"

Then she gave a sly smile.

"But he is living in the cottage where I lived."

"Poor girl! poor girl!" sighed Darlington. "I have brought you into smooth waters, and now you will go from me into stormy seas to sail and sail till you are wrecked at last."

"For what are ships built?" said Maddalena, "and for what are women made? Yes, I will sail

among the storms if I carry with me Eugenio, and if love takes the helm."

"When love takes the helm, the ship is very badly steered. But what is the use of arguing with a woman, when the man she cares for is in trouble?"

"Ah, you understand us a little after all, I see. But while we are talking, Eugenio may be starving. When shall you be ready to go?"

"*What!*" cried Darlington.

"How soon will you be able to start?"

"Where?"

"With me to Florence. I have packed up my things."

Darlington gave a scornful laugh.

"I am not in love, Maddalena, and therefore retain the possession of my senses. I shall be happy to escort you to the station."

"How can I travel all alone?" she whispered.

"I will put you under the care of an old servant whom I can trust."

"Oh, no, that will not be the same. Besides, perhaps—perhaps he may be ill."

"Oh, indeed!" said Darlington; "oh, indeed!"

Perhaps he may be ill. And on the bare chance of this——”

“Charles !”

“Of this Italian noble being ill, I am to desert all my patients.”

“Dr. Rudderforth will attend to them while you are gone.”

“And this is friendship! Oh, Maddalena, there is nothing so selfish, so pitiless, so unreasonable as a woman in love.

“Charles, come with me,” she whispered ; and throwing her innocent arms round his neck——“Yes, this is friendship! It is sacrifice. Would I not make as great a sacrifice for you? You know I would. Come, Charles, Carlino mio! this is the last service you may ever be able to do me. It is not a whim, my friend, my brother ; it is a wish—a craving which I cannot explain to myself.”

“But,” said Darlington, whose voice from contemptuous had become only firm, and now a little feeble, “I am advertised to read a paper before the Royal Society next Wednesday night.”

“Have it postponed.”

“I am under an engagement to write several

scientific articles and reviews before the end of the month."

"You can write them on the road."

Darlington looked over the letter again. *The miliare fever is very bad.* "I want to study the miliare," he said, in a hesitating tone.

"That is right," she said, "you have a scientific excuse. We shall be able to start this afternoon, shall we not?"

CHAPTER VIII.

A CARRIAGE was crossing the campagna of Florence. It was night. The cold wan wilderness lay around. A mist was rising from the bowels of the earth. On the brink of the horizon the Apennines loomed forth in monstrous and forbidding shapes. Above, the moon flung a tawny light upon the clouds as they sailed swiftly past.

"Charles," said Maddalena, as she clasped his arm, "do you believe in presentiments?"

"In physical disease," he said. "In epilepsy, for example, and in fever, the patient has often a vague fear of coming evil. This is the first symptom of the malady itself."

"And may not the mind have its instincts as well as the body? May not human beings be able to feel an evil which is drawing near?"

He shook his head. "I have experienced pre-

sentiments myself," he said, "frequently enough. But happily they have not come true. They may be traced nearly always to deranged digestion, or to simple depression of the mind."

"Charles," she cried, "something dreadful is going to happen. I feel a storm in the air. Holy Mother, have pity on me! Have I not endured enough?"

"It is this gloomy night which causes your apprehensions," he said. "If we could have gone by railway, you would have felt nothing of the kind."

He felt her pulse. "You have a slight attack of fever," he said. "That alone would account for your fears. Cheer up, Maddalena, and I——"

"Ah!" she cried. Her face became ashy pale, and she followed something with her finger through the air.

"What was that?"

"I saw Eugenio," she said. "He passed by me dressed in ragged clothes, and his eyes were closed."

Darlington shouted to the postilion, who cried and cracked his whip. The horses galloped rapidly along.

Darlington was not superstitious, and it is superstition to disbelieve whatever we cannot explain. He had himself seen the vision of a friend twice. On the first occasion his friend had at that same hour been taken seriously ill ; on the second occasion at that same hour he had died.

They were close to Florence. They could already see the lights.

“Hark !” said Maddalena.

He listened, but could hear nothing. He supposed that it was another of her illusions.

“I hear the psalm of death,” she said.

Her senses, sharpened by the fever, had heard the sound several minutes before it became audible to him.

He looked out and saw men dressed in white robes approaching them and carrying torches in their hands. They were taking a dead body to some burying-place outside the town.

As they passed, the red glare of the torches blazed in Maddalena’s eyes. She covered them with her hands and cried, “*It is a prophecy !*”

As soon as they had arrived at the hotel, Darlington made her go to bed, and gave her a composing

draught. He pacified her by saying that he would go and seek for news of Lorini at once.

The servants of the hotel who had admitted them were French, and knew nothing of the town. Although it was past midnight, Darlington went out into the streets, resolving to remain absent an hour or so, then to return to Maddalena, and if she was still awake to tell her that "Eugenio was well."

Presently he heard the tinkling of a bell, which became more and more distinct. And then, as if by magic, wax candles were brought to the windows of every house. The street became illuminated till it was as bright as day.

A priest appeared clad in gorgeous robes, walking under a yellow canopy, and chanting from the ritual which he held in his hand. He was followed by choristers, and by a crowd with uncovered heads.

Darlington took off his hat and followed with the rest. He was told that the priest was going to administer the last sacrament to a dying man. They passed through several streets, each of which was lighted up as they went by, till they arrived before a large and beautiful building. They

entered it by a colonnade decorated with al frescoes, and Darlington saw that it was an hospital.

As the priest crossed the threshold, he sang, "*Pax huic domini.*"

And all the people chanted in response, "*Et omnibus habitantibus in ea.*"

The priest, followed by the crowd, passed up an immense room built in the form of a cross, and congregated round a bed at the further end.

Darlington, unable to get near, loitered behind the rest. It was a strange scene, that great and silent moving crowd; the sick raising themselves in their beds and watching it pass with haggard eyes; the nurses clustering together in their blue gowns, with their bare arms folded on their breasts; and a group of students standing round the stove, laughing and talking loudly with one another.

To these last Darlington approached, and said, "What is the case, gentlemen?"

They immediately recognised the doctor by his tone, and replied, "Here comes the Professor, signore."

A tall man came from the bed, shrugging his shoulders, and looking back at the crowd with an air of comic disdain.

"The stag must be surrendered to the vultures," he said. "I can do no more."

"What is the case, signore?" asked Darlington.

"Last stage of the miliare. Complete collapse and insensibility."

"Excellent!" said Darlington. "Signore, I have come to Florence for the purpose of making an experiment on these cases. My name is Darlington; some of my works have been, I believe, translated into Italian."

"And into all other European languages. My name is Melzi."

"Then we know each other," said Darlington, replying to the bow. "Now, from certain experiments which I have made upon the nervous system, I am inclined to believe that ice applied to the spine in the last stage of miliare and other diseases, will have the effect of preserving, or rather, I may say, of restoring life."

"You shall try it, signore, you shall try it as soon as this mummery is over. We are not at Madrid or at Rome, where science is completely priest-ridden. Still it would be difficult to interrupt them at this moment. They are administering the sacred

oil now to his eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth, hands, and loins, and granting him plenary indulgence for his sins. Then they will give the 'Benedictio in articulo mortis,' and after that the 'Recommendation of a Soul departing.' They will not be very long. They have finished the extreme unction already, it seems"

"*Kyrie eleison !*" cried the priest. "*Christe eleison ! Kyrie eleison !*"

At that moment the crowd waved backwards ; some whispered voices were heard. Two nurses dived in, and came out, bearing the body of a man.

"What is that, Maria ?" asked the Professor.

"It is an old man who has fainted, signore," said the nurse. "They say he is the servant of the dying man."

"I dare say it is another case of miliare," said the Professor. "If so, signore, you will have two strings to your bow."

The students laughed, and followed him towards the bed where the old man had been laid.

"By the way," said Darlington, "can you tell me, signor, if the Marchese dei Lorini is still in Florence ?"

The Professor stood still, and looked at him aghast.

Darlington saw himself encircled by astonished eyes.

“Who did you say?”

“The Marchese dei Lorini.”

The Professor pointed to the bed.

“*He is there!*”

Darlington gave a cry, burst through the kneeling crowd, and bent over the body which was stretched upon the bed.

“Ice!” he cried: “bring me ice!”

“Away with you, profaner!” cried the crowd.
“Down with the heretic!”

He was seized, and torn struggling from the bedside.

The priest recited rapidly the “*Benedictio in articulo mortis.*”

“Down with superstition!” cried the students, and, uniting together, they dashed into the crowd, dealing blows in every direction. A hideous struggle took place around the dying man; it was only ended by the priest, who ordered his adherents to come round him. Then there was a pause. On one side

of the bed stood Darlington, encircled by the students ; on the other the priest, surrounded by a crowd, now kneeling and still. It was the "Recommendation of a Soul departing."

"Depart, Christian soul, out of this world, in the name of God the Father Almighty, who created thee: In the name of Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who suffered for thee: In the name of the Holy Ghost, who sanctified thee: In the name of the Angels, Archangels, Thrones and Dominations, Cherubims and Seraphims: In the name of the Patriarchs and Prophets, of the holy Apostles and Evangelists, of the holy Martyrs and Confessors, of the holy Monks and Hermits, of the holy Virgins, and of all the Saints of God: let thy place be this day in peace, and thy abode in holy SION, through Christ our Lord. Amen."

"Remain, faint spark of life," murmured Darlington, bending over the motionless and prostrate form; "oh! remain, faint spark of life, till I can fan thee to a flame."

The priest continued his prayers. The body was turned, the back bared, and the ice applied to the knotted curling spine.

The priest closed his book and said :—

“ Dear friends, our brother here has now been absolved from all his sins ; he has been anointed with the holy oil ; he has received the last blessing of the Church. We have saved this poor erring soul from the hands of the great Enemy, and the sweet Shepherd will now receive him among His flock.”

But the crowd tossed and undulated and uttered a low cry, and dragged itself along on its knees towards the bed. They had seen the body shudder and turn upon its back, and a live face stared at them with open and bewildered eyes.

“ Gentlemen,” said Darlington, in the cold tone of a Professor, “ the experiment, as you see, has so far met with success, and I am happy to inform you that the patient’s life will, in all probability, be saved.”

CHAPTER IX.

DARLINGTON gradually explained to Maddalena what had taken place. She wished, of course, to live at Eugenio's bedside; but abandoned this desire when he said that her presence might murder him with joy. He allowed her, however, to visit Antonio, who was also sick with fever, but who, having learnt that his master lived, was rapidly recovering.

Antonio lay in the great ward. Lorini's bed had been rolled into one of the little rooms which are set aside in Italian hospitals for private patients, who, by paying a small sum per diem, receive the best nursing, diet, and medical attendance that the town can afford. In London, unhappily, this arrangement is as yet unknown. How many there are in the middling classes who may not seek a pauper's bed in the hospital, but who during a long sickness in the solitude of lodgings are plundered by their landladies

and servants, neglected by their hired and unwatched nurses, and who rise at length to find themselves hopelessly embarrassed by their doctor's bill.

Maddalena nursed Antonio, pouring out upon him those treasures of love which belonged to Eugenio, and which he could not receive. Antonio rewarded her by talking of *him*.

"The Signora Pinsuti," he said, "has done us evil, but she atoned for it that night. She found him lying all but dead in the street; she carried him to the hospital, and she even sent up to me to say that my master was dying. When I heard this, I ran down here as fast as I could. I found him lying on the bed with twenty doctors standing round him. He did not know me. I hung over his mouth, and I took in his feeble breath. I thought perhaps that I might catch the fever like that, and take it away from him. And, you see, I did!" said Antonio, with an air of triumph. "The Doctor thinks he cured him with ice; and I say to him, 'Ah! yes, Doctor, that was a grand cure. What a mercy it was that you came in time!' Then I laugh at him in my sleeve."

"And if you had not saved him, Antonio, what would you have done?"

"I should have died, of course," said Antonio, simply. And then he added, smiling, "I thought of that, too. I thought that we should be laid in the Mortuario together, and perhaps they might have buried us both in the same grave. Yes, and I felt myself dying, too, till the Doctor came to me and said, 'My good Antonio, your master is saved.' Then I gave a bound within myself, and I said, 'Antonio, my friend, you must live! What will the Marchese do without you? He cannot hire a servant, and who is to cook his dinner—when there is anything to cook?' Ah! signora, we have gone through hard times of late."

"Antonio," she said, "I know that you have saved some money from your wages: why did you not buy some food with that, and send to me? You know that I would have paid you back."

Antonio looked at her with an air of mild surprise.

"I paid the rent of the cottage with my savings, signora," he said.

"He accepted money from you, then?" said Maddalena, with a pang of jealousy.

"He did not know it," said Antonio, with a chuckle.

"Oh," thought she to herself, "how superior is this old man's love to mine ! He serves his master like a slave ; he secretly supports him from his own poor means ; and he finds it quite natural to die because he is dying, to live because he is saved. Antonio," she said, taking his hand, "those hard days are over now. I am coming to live with you again."

"Ah, that is right," he cried.

"If he will not let me live with him, I will live near to him. If he does not wish to see me, he shall not see me, but I shall see him sometimes, shall I not, Antonio ?"

"Oh, yes," said Antonio, rubbing his hands, "you shall see him. I will take care of that ; and I will come to you every day, and tell you what he says and what he does."

"Yes," said Maddalena, sadly, "I will live by his side if it must be by stealth ; but I will never leave him again."

"But, signora, there is no need to talk of that. He will not let you go away. He is very sorry for what he said."

"But he will refuse to let me help him," she said. Then her face brightened. "Antonio," she said, "I have bought the villa and the estate."

"Ah!"

"And I have left them to him in my will. He will not refuse them when I am gone."

"I tell you what we will do," said Antonio. "As soon as he is strong enough, the Brothers of the Misericordia shall carry him up to the villa. He shall see you there for the first time; and then if he should refuse, he will not have a heart."

"And if he has not a heart, Antonio?"

"Then go back to England."

"And you, would you wish to serve a master who has no heart?"

"Oh, it is different for me," stammered Antonio. "I am only a servant, you know. I love him, to be sure, but that is no reason why he should love me. Sometimes he gives me a smile or a kind look, or says in his sweet voice, 'Grazie tante, Antonio mio,' and then I feel as if I could dance with joy. But sometimes I have to do without that, and so I can. I feel happy when I am looking at him, you know," said Antonio, becoming

terribly confused, "when I am doing something for him."

"If he called you bad names, what should you do, Antonio?"

"Shut my ears."

"If he told you to go away from him?"

"He did once, and I refused to go."

"If he drove you out of doors by force?"

"I should come back again."

"But this is to be a dog, not a man."

"And which is best?" asked Antonio. "If I was a man I should be discontented and grumbling; but as I am Lorini's dog, I am always happy, you see."

"Well, Antonio," said Maddalena, "I mean to love him in the same way."

Antonio shook his head. "You can't," said he.

She smiled, though a little sadly. "You do not know what a woman can do. But, Antonio, we must make him rich. He must live as he did in the old days. He must bring out his opera. He must become again the Marchese dei Lorini. Now, if he refuses to let me help him, what are we to do?"

Antonio scratched his head. Maddalena gave a bright smile.

"You think he would take it, after I am dead, do you not? Well, first of all I shall see him in the villa. Then, if the worst comes to the worst, I shall go away. A short time afterwards, he shall receive the news of my death, though I shall not be dead, all the same. Then he will become rich, and I shall hide myself somewhere near at hand."

"Yes, that will be capital!" cried Antonio. Then his face became clouded. "But that will not be a good life for you, signora."

"Perhaps he will love me a little," she said, "when he thinks that I am dead, and that I shall never trouble him again."

"Oh, signora, he loves you now."

"Hush!" she said, raising her forefinger. "You told me that once before."

A nurse passed them with broths and jellies, and entered by a little door into Eugenio's room. The eyes of Antonio and Maddalena followed her with one look.

"He is getting stronger," said Antonio, "that is

evident. Ah, signora, don't you wish that *we* were going in there ? ”

Maddalena sighed.

Darlington came out of the room with a radiant face. “Convalescence has begun,” said he.

Maddalena told him that she had just received a letter from her lawyer. The Villa Lorini was now her property. Then she confided to him their idea of taking Lorini there.

Darlington had remarked with what care and skill the Brothers of the Misericordia carried invalids through the streets. Lorini would derive benefit from the pure air of the hills, and Maddalena, whose own health was in a very precarious state, would be occupied in preparing the villa, and so saved from incessant brooding upon one idea.

“I approve,” said he ; “and get the villa ready at once. You will have to work hard, for my patient will soon be ready for removal. As for our Antonio here, he may get up to-morrow if he likes.”

While Maddalena was hurrying over Florence making purchases and engaging workmen, she was usually attended by the Signora Pinsuti, who,

having saved Eugenio's life, had established a claim upon her friendship.

When she discovered that Maddalena had heard of her share in the conspiracy, though ignorant of the leading part which she had taken, she insisted on recurring frequently to this unpleasant subject, apparently for the purpose of backbiting the Baroness Sackowsky.

"Ah, dear," she said, "that was a bad woman!—a bad woman! What a fatal influence she gained over me! And she left me with a smile on her lips, promising to send me a dress from Paris, and lace from England, and to write to me every day. I have never heard from her since, and I found out that before she left, she went round to all my friends and poisoned their minds against me. And this after all my devotion to her. Maddalena, I was infatuated by that woman. I was her dupe—her slave. You would never be able to imagine what things she used to make me do."

Darlington observed that Maddalena's new friend looked at him with an evil eye; that she evidently found him *il terzo incomodo* when he offered his escort to her and Maddalena; and that she received

the news of Lorini's advancing convalescence with outward demonstrations of joy, which were belied by the expression of her mouth and eyes. But presently he observed that she came no more, and when he asked Maddalena why it was, she blushed, and gave an evasive reply.

The end of this lady's career may be told at once. Shortly afterwards her husband died of the *miliare*, and the signora, who was now forty-five, became a devotee, in obedience to an unalterable moral law. Under the garb of piety she crept into the bosom of many families, and made it her chief duty to teach little girls the doctrines of the Catholic religion, and to prepare their minds for the reception of the blessed sacrament. But it happened that one of her protégées made some revelations at the confessional which astonished the old priest, in spite of his auricular experience in female sins. The laws of the Church prevented him from divulging them, but he warmly exhorted the child to tell her parents what she had just told him. The parents could not for their own sake openly expose the Signora Pinsuti, but they circulated a whisper; other parents questioned their daughters; the result of which was

that this mentor of youth lost all her pupils, and was compelled to leave Florence at once. She entered a nunnery at Naples, where she lived for a long time universally beloved, and died unanimously unregretted.

* * * * *

One day Lorini awoke, as it seemed to him, from a long sleep. He found himself in a bed with yellow curtains. At a little distance were two other beds. A woman dressed in a blue gown bent over him, and placed her hand upon his brow ; he smiled and went to sleep.

The next time that he awoke it was night. An oil-light was burning on a little table at the bed-side. He tried to think, but the effort tired his brain, and he slept again.

But the third time he felt his head more clear ; he saw that he was in the hospital ; he attempted to recall the past. Was that a dream which he had had ? A priest standing before him in his robes, and a mob of faces, and the voice of Charles Darlington, and a dull murmur like that of the sea ?

The nurse passed by the bed. He pointed to a little mirror which was hung against the wall. She

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"Yes," said Darlington.

"But how do I come here?"

"You were brought by the Brothers of the Misericordia."

"Yes, I know that; but I mean, having sold the villa, what right have I to live in it?"

"The present owner of the villa is a friend of mine. I told her that I meant to have you removed to the hills. She very naturally offered you a suite of apartments here."

"She—it is a lady then?"

"Yes."

"And she has given me a suite of apartments?"

"Yes. Do you feel yourself strong enough to go into your sitting-room?"

"Yes," he said, eagerly; "I am getting so tired of bed."

"A very good sign," said Darlington, who rang the bell. Antonio and another servant carried him into the saloon of the villa, and laid him on a couch. He looked round. Books and papers were scattered about just as they used to be in former times. The furniture was new, but a fac-simile of the old. There was nothing in the room which had not been there

two years and a-half before, except the manuscript of his opera, which was laid on the piano.

"My friend," said Eugenio, in a fluttering voice, "who is she, this person who has bought my villa?"

"A rich parvenue, with some absurdly romantic ideas, but a very good-hearted woman, for all that. You will see her soon, no doubt."

Eugenio sighed, and said no more. He was now nursed by Antonio, whose tenderness and care supplied the place of experience and skill. But once he found a woman's handkerchief upon the coverlet of his bed. He seized it, and examined it with avidity. It was not marked, but he felt it all damp with tears.

Who was this mysterious woman who gave him her house, who wept over him, who would not let him see her face, whom Darlington declared to be a parvenue, and whom Antonio swore that he had never seen. Devoured by curiosity he could think of nothing else.

He was now able to walk about the salon, where everything reminded him of Maddalena. Once he found a book open at a passage which he had read to her, and which he had made her learn by heart.

Once he found some red camellias scattered on the table. In the winter he had always made her wear those flowers in her hair. He became convinced that it was Maddalena who had bought the villa. He said so to Darlington, who pretended to deride so preposterous an idea.

An expression of bitter disappointment crossed his face; Darlington told Maddalena that the experiment might be made.


One afternoon Eugenio was asleep on the couch in the salon. He was awoke by music—the most delicate luxury that the senses can enjoy.

But a luxury of the heart awaited him as well. He recognised the air—it was from his opera—it was La Donati's confession of love. He recognised the voice: it was Maddalena's.

"MADDALENA!" he cried, and she came in, her face shining with the light of which smiles are born. She came to him, and without speaking, laid her head upon his breast.

They remained thus for a little while too happy to speak. They both felt inclined to cry.

"Maddalena!" he said, softly, "I am thy guest, am I not?"



"No, Eugenio, I am thine : this villa belongs to thee."

"I accept it," he said.

She gave a cry of joy.

"Maddalena, forgive me for what is past."

"Nay, Eugenio, forgive *me* for what is past."

Then they began to dispute which was most to blame. They painted themselves in the blackest colours, and neither would listen to the other.

"But it is enough of the past," said Eugenio. "We will not sing *Tempo Passato* any more. My darling, thou wilt stay with me always, wilt thou not?"

"Yes, always, dearest Eugenio. I will never leave thee again."

"Art thou sure?" he said, with an air of incredulity.

"Oh, Eugenio!" she cried, the tears coming to her eyes.

"I must take my precautions," he said, in a stern voice. "I must bind thee to me, little runaway. I must render thee subject to the laws of the Church."

She sprang from him, and looked at him with startled eyes.

"Come, patient, long-suffering heart," he cried, stretching out his arms, "come, rest on mine, and never leave it more."

Then he sang in a whisper that promise which he had once made in sport :—

" A consolarmi affrettisi
O giorno sospirato !
Innanzi al cielo agli uomini
Tuo sposo diverrò."

"Oh, Eugenio!" she cried, flinging her arms round his neck.

"Why, what is all this?" said Darlington, coming in. "Here is the lady who promised not to excite my patient, in a state of very passable excitement herself."

"Doctor," said Eugenio, "when shall I be strong enough to leave the house?"

"Where do you want to go?"

"To a church."

"To a church! and why?"

"Maddalena is going with me."

"Then you must wait a month at least."

"And he will not be the last of the Lorini, after all," cried Antonio, rushing wildly from

the room, where apparently he had been concealed.

It was one of the first warm evenings of the year. Eugenio, wrapped in furs, was seated on the marble bench, with Maddalena at his side. Below them lay Florence, with her thousand lamps, beautiful and bright as if they were reflections of the stars above.

"Dost thou remember," he whispered, "that night when we sat here—when thy hand by accident touched mine—when that air from Torquato Tasso first called up love from the bottom of my heart?"

"Dost thou remember," she replied, "when I came out here and found the jewels, and thou wert hid behind the trees?"

"And dost thou remember how we used to sit here hand in hand, as we do now, and look upon the stars and listen to the city chimes?"

"Yes, yes, Eugenio, all our sweetest memories lie here; like ghosts they hover round us."

"We will make them take life again. Maddalena, *to-morrow!*"

"Yes, *to-morrow!* my Eugenio." She glanced at him, and they blushed together.

Darlington, followed by Antonio, came towards them.

"Eugenio," he said, "you must come in; it is growing cold. I am still your tyrant, you know. After to-morrow you will be free."

"Ah, yes," sighed Maddalena; "that is the only drawback to our happiness, that you must go."

"You must visit me in England."

"Yes," she said, "for you we will do that. But nothing else should make us go near that odious land."

Eugenio was seated between his friend and his betrothed, each of whom held a hand in theirs. Antonio was crouched at his feet, which he furtively kissed now and then.

"Oh," said Eugenio, "what have I done to merit all this love? This love from thee, Maddalena? This love from thee, Antonio? Even Jenoure saved my patrimony from a stranger's hands, and you, dear Charles, have saved my life. What return can I ever make to you?"

"By being good to Maddalena," he replied, in a solemn voice. "If you owe me any gratitude, pay it to this dear girl, to whom you owe much more."

The lovers looked with surprise at Darlington. In what a strange tone he had spoken, and how sad his face had turned! He had just thought of the letter from Jenoure.

"You must think of something else," said Eugenio, trying to laugh. "I already owe Maddalena more debts of the heart than I shall ever live to repay. Besides, they will go on increasing, I fear."

"Well, as for myself," said the doctor, cheerfully, "you make me the best return when you talk and laugh. Do you remember my dispute with Jenoure as to whether doctors were artists or not? Well, I look upon you as a medical masterpiece, my friend. I feel the same pleasure in seeing you walk and in hearing you speak as Jenoure has in looking at a finished picture, or as you will have when you listen to your opera admirably sung."

"And what feeling have you," said Maddalena, "when you see me here with him, and not unworthy of him, as I might have been? You have saved Eugenio from death, but you have saved me from that which is worse than death."

"It gives me pleasure," he replied, "to pluck a



man out of the jaws of death ; and yet I know that this life has many miseries, and that after all he must die some day. But to save a heart from anguish and woe, or from sinfulness and shame—ah ! that gives me happiness indeed. It is a happiness which Heaven has allowed me often to enjoy. Under a doctor's disguise, I go as a missionary among suffering souls, and my labours have not been all in vain. This is my religion, Maddalena ; and these are the prayers which I offer up to God.”

[To be continued.]



